

# **Witness and Profession**

**Clerical Professionalism in the Light of Søren  
Kierkegaard's 'Attack Upon Christendom'**

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1994**



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# Preface

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This thesis centres on Søren Kierkegaard's (hereafter designated SK) critique of clerical expression in the *Attack upon Christendom* and examines its significance in relation to the contemporary question of clerical professionalisation. It focuses on SK's description of the 'Witness to the truth' and explores this in the light of some of the recent discussions concerned with the professional dimension of modern ministry.

## **purpose of the study**

The thesis is an attempt to address and shed light on the later period in SK's life and thought and to assess its implication in relation to contemporary issues of ministry. Thus the purpose of the thesis consists of three basic elements. The first of which is to explore and develop SK's thought concerning the nature of clerical expression in nineteenth century Denmark, looking specifically at his critique of ordained ministry in the *Attack Upon Christendom* and the factors leading up to this. The second, is to examine what relevance SK thought has to the present discussion concerning the nature of clerical professionalisation. And the third, is to develop a possible contemporary understanding and model of ministry in the light of SK's critique, in view of the issues surrounding the professional aspects of ministerial expression.

## The thesis

This thesis contends that our knowledge of SK's intellectual development and his relationship to his age and society has been paltry, distorted, and even neglected, this giving rise to a caricature of SK as the lonely individual, driven to write in the midst of religious despair and introspection. However, when one looks closely at SK and his work this caricature can be seen to completely ignore the complex relationships that he had to his society, the academic and cultural elite of Denmark, and the socio-political ferment of his age. When read in this context a very different understanding and interpretation of SK is suggested, especially in relation to his later works. The interpretation of SK in this thesis, therefore, assumes that SK cannot be understood in isolation from his social and historical context.

The thesis argues that if SK is read in his socio-political and historical context, his later works can be seen to be driven by the conviction that the Christian religion is an essential element in the process of social change and renewal, and that the loss of religious conviction and awareness in social relations and structures creates an oppressive and dehumanising society. This is to say, in SK Christianity has an important social function and role. It insures that manipulative and self-interested social relations and structures do not negate people's awareness of one and another in the full equality and validity of their individuality. Christianity fosters people's awareness of their moral obligation and responsibility to one and other. It draws a distinction between the manipulation of individuals and objects in the material world for the sake of convenience and self-interest, and the posture of a subject, the self, in relation to eternity.

However, this thesis suggests that for SK the social influence of Christianity was inextricably bound up with the nature and role of the ordained ministry within the life of society. In SK Christianity is communicated not through theological propositions, but in patterns of behaviour. Christianity is a manner of being, a way of existing, not merely an affirmation of doctrine. Thus SK's thought implies that the occupational patterns and commitments of the ordained ministry embody and express values and ideals that are fundamental to the development of social life, as they act as the custodians of a specific moral and ethical code and ethico-religious tradition. That is to say, for SK the role of the clerical profession is to insure that basic ethical and religious values are not eroded by the self-interested and pragmatic nature of social relations. The ordained minister is to be a 'Witness to the truth'.

The contention of this thesis, therefore, is that it was out of this concern with the role of the clergy in shaping social values and perceptions, and the failure of the Danish clergy in this respect, that *the Attack Upon Christendom* evolved. In view of this, the thesis goes on to argue that this nineteenth century critique of clerical expression finds an affinity with the contemporary discussion surrounding clerical professionalisation. The thesis looks at the way in which the occupational identity and characteristics of the professions are seen to shape social perceptions and values, and how this relates to SK's understanding of the role and importance of the ordained ministry and its occupational commitments. In the light of SK, this is seen to be more than simply a question of occupational autonomy and power, but relates to what the occupational commitments and identity of the ordained ministry mean for the communication of Christianity. It concerns the values that are embraced and the interests that are served by the ordained ministry and what this says about the nature of Christianity in modern society.

Therefore, the thesis sets out to illustrate that SK brings at least two fundamental considerations to the question of clerical professionalisation. Firstly, he provides a theological framework in which the questions surrounding the professional dimensions of modern ministry can be considered. He sets and interprets the role and nature of the clergy in relation to his understanding of Christ as the one who challenges the self-interested and alienated structure of human existence and calls people to recognise their moral obligation and responsibility towards God and others. The ordained ministry is to act as the representative of Christ through imitation, and so the occupational identity and commitments of the clergy must challenge the self-interested and oppressive structures of human society and provide a basis for moral and religious renewal.

Secondly, in view of this, SK sets the problem of professionalisation in the context of Christian witness. He asks the question as to what do the values that are embraced and expressed in the occupational commitments and identity of the ordained ministry mean for the communication of Christianity. He raises the potential of the ordained ministry to influence and shape social relations and structures and to act as a force that regulates the self-interested and egotistic nature of the life of society. Thus this thesis sets out to show that SK brings a distinctive theological and Christological perspective by which to consider the issues surrounding clerical professionalisation and to look at the significance of the occupational identity and commitments of the ordained ministry in the life of society.

## structure

To accomplish this, the thesis is divided into four sections. The opening section looks at life in Denmark at the time of SK, developing in considerable detail the role of the church and the clergy in Danish society. Moreover, it documents the circumstances and the significant developments in SK's thought leading up to the *Attack*. The second section provides a detailed analysis of the principal themes developed by SK in his critique and in particular examines his understanding of ministry in terms of being 'a Witness to the truth'. In view of this, the third section goes on to look at the problem of clerical professionalisation. In this section, a brief account of the various theories that surround the idea of professionalisation is given and the implications for the nature of ministry discussed. The relationship between professionalism and ministerial witness is then looked at. The final section, is concerned with what form and direction in ministry is suggested by SK and his understanding of 'Witnessing to the truth'.

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## Abbreviations used in relation to Kierkegaard's works

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AN	<i>Armed Neutrality and An Open Letter</i> [1968], trans. H. Hong and E. Hong, New York: Simon and Schuster.
AUC	<i>Attack Upon Christendom</i> [1968], trans. W. Lowrie, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
CA	<i>The Corsair Affair</i> [1982], eds. and trans. H. Hong and E. Hong, vol. XIII, <i>Kierkegaard's Writings</i> , Princeton: Princeton University Press.
CD	<i>The Concept of Dread</i> [1944], trans. W. Lowrie, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
CUP	<i>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</i> [1941], trans. D. Swenson, ed. W. Lowrie, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
ED	<i>Edifying Discourses</i> [1943-46], 4 vols., trans. D. Swenson and L. Swenson, Minneapolis: Augsburg.
EO	<i>Either/Or</i> [1959], 2 vols. trans. D. Swenson and L. Swenson, rev. by H. Johnson. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
FSE/JFY	<i>For Self-Examination and Judge for Yourself</i> [1968], trans. W. Lowrie, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- FT            *Fear and Trembling and Repetition* [1983], eds. and trans. H. Hong and E. Hong, vol.VI, *Kierkegaard's Writings*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- JP            *Soren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers* [1967-78], 6 vols. and index, eds. and trans. H. Hong and E. Hong, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- OAR          *On Authority and Revelation* [1955], trans. W. Lowrie, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- PA            *The Present Age* [1962], trans. A. Dru, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- pap.          *Soren Kierkegaard's Papirer* [1968-78], 25 vols, 2nd ed., eds. P. Heilberg, V. Kuhr, E. Torsting, N. Thulstrup, index by N. Cappelorn, Copenhagen: Gyldendal.
- PF            *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus* [1985], eds. and trans. H. Hong and E. Hong, vol.VII, *Kierkegaard's Writings*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- PV            *The Point of View for My Activity as an Author* [1962], trans. W. Lowrie, New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- SUD          *Sickness Unto Death* [1980], eds. and trans. H. Hong and E. Hong, vol.XIX, *Kierkegaard's Writings*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- SOLW        *Stages On Life's Way* [1967], trans. W. Lowrie, New York:Schocken
- TA            *Two Ages* [1978], eds. and trans. H. Hong and E. Hong, vol.XIV, *Kierkegaard's Writings*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- TC            *Training in Christianity* [1967], trans W. Lowrie, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- WL            *Works of Love* [1962], trans. H. Kong and E. Hong, London: Collins.

**Part one**

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# **Kierkegaard, The Church, and Nineteenth Century Denmark**

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## Chapter One

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# Kierkegaard in context

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In many ways SK's personal and intellectual complexity mirrors that of the period in which he lived. A time of conflict and contradiction, social change, and artistic innovation. An age of transition, marked by a revolution in social, political, and religious structures and relationships, the life of Denmark coming to be shaped by the bourgeoisie values of a new social order. 'SK lived through the transition of Denmark from a state operating according to feudalistic principles in agriculture and industry and presided over by an absolute monarch to a state surpassed only by England in its commitment to the principles of democratic and economic liberalism' (Elrod, 1981, p.4). Yet it was also a period of religious ferment with a constant succession of ecclesiastical and theological controversies, and the growth of religious movements both inside and outside the Church. Such religious turmoil and ecclesiastical unrest in many ways bears witness to the shared perception of crisis and the need which was felt for spiritual renewal throughout this period of change (Plekon, 1983, pp.260-264).

No single collection of SK's writings reflects this relationship to his context more vividly than the *Attack upon Christendom*. Possibly more than any other of SK's works the *Attack* is engaged with, and develops out of, the political and historical realities which embraced nineteenth century Denmark. For instance, the very date SK chose to start his vicious critique of the Church, December 18, 1854, was the very same day as a new liberal administration was appointed by the King (Kirmmse, 1977, p.7). Before it is possible, therefore, to understand the content of the *Attack* and its perspective on ministry, it is necessary to have some idea of the social and historical context and the tensions in Danish society out of which it was born.

In the course of this chapter, I propose to look at some of these elements, paying particular attention to the nature of the ecclesiastical institution and its response to, and role in, the emergence of the common man and Copenhagen's cultural elite.

## **1.1. socio-economic context**

Denmark was primarily an agricultural society at the time of SK. Over ninety percent of the population were employed in cultivating the land, on some eighty thousand farms clustered together to make villages, along with almost a thousand manorial estates (Danstrup, 1948, p.98). In the past, oppressive legislation, taxation and ineffective farming techniques, had ensured that the structure of Danish society had remained comparatively unchanged. Laws dating back to the fifteenth century made it mandatory for the heir of a tenant farmer to take over his father's lease. Farmers' sons, having become artisans or tradesmen in towns, were compelled to abandon their occupation and return to the cultivation of the soil, so ensuring the existing social order.

However, throughout SK's lifetime the monopoly of the land owning aristocracy of political and ecclesiastical institutions was slowly disintegrating as the practice of collective farming in small villages and on large estates was replaced by private ownership of land and individual farming for profit. By 1840 farmers of independent means made up over half the farming population. This trend not only decreased the influence of the ruling aristocracy, but increased the desire of the peasant population for political and religious autonomy. Thus the agricultural reform process may be seen to have caused 'a qualitative transformation of a people's understanding and perception of themselves' (Elrod, 1981, p.11).

### **land reforms**

The dramatic changes in the social and political life of Denmark through which SK lived, were primarily a result of the programme of agricultural and economic reform, inaugurated by the future Frederick VI, just before the end of the eighteenth century. Up until that point, starvation, disease and acute poverty had characterised the existence of the rural population. SK recounts on a trip to his father's 'barren and desolate' home parish, 'It is related here in Saeding that there is a house hereabouts where once there lived a man who in time of the pest outlived all others and buried them. He ploughed long furrows in the peat and buried his neighbours in long rows'

(quoted from Lowrie, 1944, p.19). This suffering was further intensified by the fact that the land owning aristocracy had complete control over the peasant's life, controlling government taxation and farm leases<sup>1</sup>.

With the expansion of the Danish economy in 1730, through the recovery of grain exports to Norway and the developing markets for livestock in Northern Germany, the landlords, in order to increase productivity and profit, instituted a number of oppressive laws. In 1733 the so-called 'stavnsbaand' was introduced, a variation of the fifteenth century law which ensured that all Danish farmers' sons from their 14th to their 36th year should be bound as villeins to the estates on which they were born. And in 1746 this was taken one step further, with the unprecedented law that even soldiers who had served their time were bound to return to the same estate and to take up tenant farms.

Coupled with these laws, was the reintroduction of a national militia which enabled a landlord to threaten young peasants with at least six years of army service, if he failed to work on his estates. Effectively this created a form of serfdom, every peasant being expected to provide at least three days free labour on an estate, in order to cover his taxes or pay his rent. Yet although this system provided cheap labour and met the manpower needs of the army, it failed to provide a sufficient basis for economic or agricultural growth. The peasants performed poorly on the domains of the landlords and had insufficient time to properly cultivate their own holdings, with no reason whatsoever to attempt to improve them. Therefore, Danish agriculture throughout the middle part of the eighteenth century suffered from an incredibly low level of productivity (Glyn-Jones, 1986; Feldbaek, 1980).

However, when in 1756 war broke out between France and England, the neutral trade of Denmark began to grow at an ever increasing rate. With the price of grain rising, this provided an opportunity for the significant growth of the Danish economy. Yet with the existing methods of farming and the patriarchal structure which surrounded the rural community, such expansion without radical reform was virtually impossible. Increasing pressure, therefore, began to mount within the Danish establishment for change. In 1760 the journal *Danmarks og Norges Oeconomiske Magazin* offered a medal for the

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<sup>1</sup> Tax exemption in the history of Denmark had been the principal mark of the aristocracy. Up until the fifteenth century any Dane could become a noble by presenting himself, in time of war, well-equipped for military service at his own expense. In return he received exemption from all taxes on his entire estate. However after the fifteenth century nobility was established only if it could be proved that his forefathers had enjoyed tax exemption for at least three generations.

best answer to the question: 'What are the most considerable obstacles to the abolition of common holdings in land, and by what means can they most easily and certainly be overcome, without prejudice to those concerned ?' (Elrod, 1981, p.5). Yet those who advocated change were opposed by the conservative lobby of landowners who believed, as Ove Hoegh-Guldberg stated, 'The yoke of the peasants could not be removed without Denmark's shaking and quivering to its foundations' (Danstrup, 1948, p.86).

Despite this, reforms were imminent, and when in 1784 the crown prince Frederick took power by a coup d'etat, a royal commission was appointed which under the influence of Christian Ditlev Reventlow, who had studied agriculture in England, introduced sweeping changes. In 1787 the landlords were deprived of their judicial authority over their tenants, and on June 20, 1788 the 'stavnsbaand' was abolished. Low interest loans were made available for the purchase of small farms through the setting up of a Credit Bank and large estates, once the owners saw the profit to be made, were voluntarily divided into small farms and sold to farmers who were able to operate them independently. Meanwhile, new methods of farming were introduced, giving greatly increased crop yields. Thus between 1750 and 1807 the grain crops and their export more than trebled (Danstrup, 1948, p.89).

In this new environment the Danish economy began to grow. Commerce was facilitated by the Toll Law of 1797 which extended the principle of free trade. Wealthy business grew up in Copenhagen, and the bank of issue granted ever-increasing credit. Social mobility was greatly improved and a number of tenant farmers were able to leave the countryside and make considerable fortunes. In the wake of the prosperity which engulfed Copenhagen because of its expanding trade roots with the West Indies, importing sugar, coffee, and tobacco for the European market. SK's father was one such peasant.

Thus the whole structure of Danish society was radically altered. Vast numbers of people had exchanged a visible dependence upon local forms of patriarchal authority for an invisible linkage to the diffuse and relatively anonymous credit and market forces of capitalist society. A whole new class who owned their own land, made their own agricultural decisions, and dealt daily with the impersonal forces of the credit economy, had come into being. Aggressive and enterprising members of the class had also discovered the possibility of upward social mobility through the growth of the commercial and financial institutions of Copenhagen and its industries.

A new self-respect was felt by large sections of Danish society, which found expression first in the acquisition of literacy, and later in the demand for religious and political self-determination. As Kirmmse observes, 'The common man had embarked on a long-term project of economic self improvement, the acquisition of literacy, and the quest for adulthood in religious and political affairs. And this movement for peasant adulthood far surpassed liberal nationalism in breadth, depth, and tangible accomplishment' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.741).

However, Danish society after the land reforms was also marked by a significant tension between the new emerging order and the old existing one, which was not resolved until the constitutional changes of 1849. This tension became even more acute after 1820 by which time the reform process had completely stopped, and the quest for political and religious autonomy was violently opposed. The reasons for this are to be found primarily in the effect of the Napoleonic Wars on the life of Denmark.

### **Napoleonic wars**

Much of Denmark's economic success had been because of the skilful political manoeuvring of Andres Peter Bernstorff, the foreign minister, who had managed to keep Denmark out of military conflicts. However, after his death in 1797 Denmark's foreign policy began to follow a much more hazardous course, attempting to maintain a policy of armed neutrality. In December 1800, Denmark joined the second armed league of neutrality of Baltic powers, set up to resist the British claim to the right of search at sea. This was a direct challenge and a serious threat to England. Thus in January 1801 all Dano-Norwegian ships in English ports were seized and, in the April of the same year, a fleet was sent to Copenhagen to compel Denmark's withdrawal from the league.

Eventually after a five hour battle, Denmark was forced to concede to the English demands. Yet tensions remained high between the countries, and in 1807, because of what the English perceived as the threat of Napoleon's use of the Danish fleet, the British demanded that the Danes give up the right to their navy. When the Danes resisted a devastating bombardment of Copenhagen followed, which left large sections of the city in ruins and effectively destroyed Denmark's capacity as a shipping power. In response to this, Denmark sided with Napoleon in the wars against England.

The impact of the seven year war was disastrous for Denmark, both politically and economically. The country experienced state bankruptcy in 1813, as neither taxes nor loans could raise the money to meet the immense war costs. SK, having been born in the May of that year, two months after the economic collapse, used to speak of his birth ironically as 'that year when so many worthless [literally, insane] notes were put in circulation' (Quoted by Lowrie, 1944, p.23). Copenhagen the country's commercial and economic centre was devastated by bombardment and its trading ability severally curtailed through the destruction of the Danish fleet. Thus its role as an international and financial trading centre was also lost to Hamburg. Moreover, Norway had to be given up to Sweden, and Heligoland to England, in a peace treaty which was signed at Kiel in 1814.

In view of this, the Danish economy was thrust into a post-war recession, the overseas markets for its produce being severally restricted by the English Corn Laws and the loss of Norway. With the price of grain plummeting and the collapse of a number of agriculturally based industries, such as textiles and breweries, the driving force behind the reform programme, which had been the inflated price of grain, disappeared. It was, therefore, no longer in the interests of the government or the aristocracy to encourage agricultural development. On the contrary, the interests of the small land owners now represented a threat to the established order and so Frederick VI's enlightened vision was replaced by a restrictive conservatism, with press and political censorship and harsh criminal justice.

However, it would be wrong to portray the socio-political development of Denmark between 1814-1848 as simply a conflict between a rising peasant class and an oppressive aristocracy. Frederick VI who reigned throughout most of this period, was popular with the majority of his subjects and became something of a father figure to the whole nation (Oakley, 1972, p.167). Yet what does become apparent if one looks closely at the socio-political development of Denmark at this time, is that there was a number of social tensions throughout the structure of Danish society both in rural and urban contexts.

### **process of change**

Through the reform process a whole new class of peasant farmers had been born who enjoyed a considerably higher standard of living than their peasant forefathers. On the other hand, around forty percent of the rural population had been left relatively



untouched and in many ways they had to pay the price for the success of their landowning brethren. In the wake of the reform process a significant proportion of the rural population had come to consist of cottagers who eked out a meagre existence on very small plots or day labourers who had no land at all. The reluctance of the land owning aristocracy to rent land which it was more profitable to sell, and the new contractual nature of employment, enabled the estates and the emerging small landowners to exploit a large section of the rural population.

Therefore, when in 1814 the economy collapsed, it was the cottars who were hardest hit. Unable to find work on the estates or the independent farms, many of them turned to the towns and cities and began to provide a source of cheap labour for the new textile and beer industries. By the time of SK, Copenhagen was full of a new urban poor who lived in inadequate housing with no sanitation, hemmed in by the ancient city boundaries. Yet these victims of the capitalist system had no political influence until 1846 when the liberal Anton Frederick Tscherning founded the Bodevenne Selskabet [Society of the friend of the Peasant] which fought for the resurgence of the reform process and the sharing of the burdens of taxation and military conscription.

In contrast, it was the peasant groups who had been able to improve their social position at the expense of this section of the population, that precipitated political change. As the aristocracy experienced a marked decline in power and influence, opportunity was given for the independent farmers and the new urban bourgeoisie to have a greater impact on the social and political order.

However, the land reforms also created something of a paradox, for as well as giving rise to the potential of constitutional change, it also precipitated the existence of a new predominantly conservative educated urban bourgeoisie, as the sons of successful farmers came to university to follow careers in the civil service or the emerging professions. It was this group which was to dominate the life of Denmark after 1814, the influx of young academics from the countryside shaping the life of Copenhagen and its principal institutions, laying the foundations for Denmark's cultural and scientific Golden Age. Throughout this period advances were made in chemistry, biology, botany and medicine which in turn stimulated the growth of the medical profession. Hans Christian Orsted discovered electro-magnetism and another Orsted, Andres Sando, made significant progress in the practice and theory of law, as a state legal system grew up to take the place of the judiciary of the aristocracy.

Thus between 1814-48 much of the power of the old order was transferred to this new academic elite which had at its heart the Danish Institutional Church. Yet this group took very little interest in constitutional change. Although the new urban bourgeoisie and academic elite was comprised of both conservatives and liberals, the collapse of the Danish economy [there were no fewer than 250 bankruptcies declared in Copenhagen between 1816 and 1820], meant that the financiers and traders who supported the liberal cause were not in a position to agitate for change (Oakley, 1972, p.166). In the same way, the farming community showed little interest in radical social and political change until the 1840's, when Christian VIII denied them the right of assembly and refused their request for universal conscription. Up until then, their concerns had been primarily with the renewal of the religious life of the rural community and the cause of nationalism.

Thus it was not until the interests of the independent farms were brought together with those of the city's commercial institutions in a fragile alliance in the 1840's that a new constitution was secured. Meanwhile, the agricultural reforms and economic conditions at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Denmark facilitated a new middle class who invariably supported the existing socio-political order. In so doing, they ensured that large sections of the Danish population remained in relative poverty and provided a cheap source of labour. Yet this also provided for the philosophical, artistic, literary and scientific innovation that provided for Denmark's Golden Age, of which SK was a part.

## **1.2 cultural context**

The various scientific and cultural achievements of the first half of the nineteenth century were permeated by a very distinctive cultural philosophy. Johannes Hohlenberg notes, 'Orsted was just as much a philosopher as a physicist, and had no doubt as to the supremacy of the Spirit' (Holenberg, 1954, p.10). For example, in an essay H.C. Orsted argues that the theory of evolution provides a possible defence for a belief in the spiritual unity of all things. He states, 'the concept of the universe is incomplete, unless it is understood as the constantly continued work of the eternally creative spirit' (Elrod, 1981, p.40). This bringing together of science and metaphysics was symptomatic of what was taking place throughout the academic world of Copenhagen: the emphasis on spiritual reality giving rise to a cultural and academic renaissance.



Thus Copenhagen, although beset by social and economic problems, was home to internationally - renowned sculptors and painters such as Thorvaldsen, Kobke, Eckersberg, and Jensen. It could boast of the ballet master Bournonville and had a 'literary pantheon' which included writers such as Oehlenschläger, P.M. Møller, Goldschmidt, Heiberg, and Hans Christian Andersen.

In a fascinating study of this period, S. Møller Kirstensen suggests that the literate members of the population of Copenhagen fell into three distinctive categories: the aristocracy, the upper bourgeoisie and the lower bourgeoisie. The first group consisted of the King's court and was generally very small, made up of members of the nobility. The second was significantly larger, and consisted of the academically educated portion of society, drawn invariably from the families of merchants or wealthy farmers. The third, was less distinct, but embraced the 'uneducated portion of the bourgeoisie, extending from better-off shop keepers to well-to-do craftsmen' (Kirmmse, 1977, pp.156-158).

Kirstensen goes on to point out, that the cultural output of the Golden Age was almost exclusively derived from the second of these groups. They in turn set the tone and defined good taste for the aristocracy, while having little interest for the uneducated portion of the bourgeoisie. He, therefore, argues the maximum audience for the entire output of the Golden Age was only around three to five thousand people: a suggestion borne out by the fact that a successful book by a 'high-culture' author sold only between five hundred and a thousand copies. For instance, the majority of SK's books very rarely sold more than five hundred copies (Kirmmse, 1977, p.158).

With 'the primary public' of the artistic and literary achievements of the Golden Age 'in all likelihood as good as exclusively academic', as a social phenomenon, the Golden Age was predominantly a culture of the capital and its 'conservative, apolitical, academically educated bourgeoisie' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.156). The only direct contact of the Golden Age with the rest of the population came through the university educated ministers and teachers sent out as 'apostles of high culture' to the peasant communities. However, despite its limited audience the Golden Age made a disproportionate impact on the life of Denmark, for this small academic cultural elite dominated all the country's principal institutions - Government, University, Royal Theatre and State Church. The cultural philosophy of the Golden Age, therefore, shaped the political, ecclesiastical and social development of Denmark throughout this period.

## romanticism

The principal influence on the cultural elite of Copenhagen was the desire, seen throughout Europe, for a return to the simplicity and spiritual emotions which were believed to have been lost in the rationalism of the previous centuries. This nineteenth century romanticism, as it has come to be called, was according to W. Glyn Jones, 'the periodic urge of complex civilization to strip off the social mask and recover the happiness imagined as still dwelling among the humble' (Glyn-Jones, 1986, p.52). Therefore, influenced heavily by the work of Schelling and Goethe in Germany, who had turned to traditional German folk literature [ballads, legends, love songs, etc.] to recover this lost world, the academics of Denmark began to exploit the vast wealth of Norse mythology and folk lore, creating romantic poetry, prose and drama, all of which glorified the pure emotions of the individual and the spiritual qualities of nature.

The impact of these writers on the thought of the Golden age is epitomised in SK. Both Schelling and Goethe made a considerable impression on him and numerous journal entries, especially in his early years at university, make reference to their work. (see pap.i 1 C 73 [JP1455], A 244, 233 [JP1456-7], pap.v 1 A 57 [JP1458], pap.vii 2 A 8 [JP1460], pap.x 1 A 465, 582 [JP1462-3]). Yet the man considered to be primarily responsible for the advent of Danish romanticism is Henrik Steffens, a geologist who was born in Norway and graduated in theology and the natural sciences from the University of Copenhagen. In 1802 he returned to Copenhagen after a period of time studying the philosophy of Fredrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling in Germany. On his return he gave a series of lectures at the university which were attended by most of the academic fraternity, including Adam Oehlenschläger and N.F.S. Grundtvig.

The essence of these nine lectures published under the title *Introduction to Philosophical Lectures*, was that truth cannot be found in empirical science but must be discovered through an awareness of the presence of the eternal in the finite. 'An infinite presence seems to have concealed itself behind every visible form and beams forth mystically towards us...A deep longing awakens within us' (Elrod, 1981, p.13). To Steffens it was only the philosopher, in co-operation with the poet, who can 'see through the disconnected assemblages of facts to the divine, the eternal, the infinite ground in and through which all are united' (Elrod, 1981, p.13).

Thus his philosophy focused on the awakening of the individual to the eternal presence in nature, through the appropriation of poetry and philosophy. It was, therefore, highly individualistic and interpreted history in terms of the growth of the individual's spiritual awareness. 'The individual now becomes an expression of the Eternal, and the entire movement of history can be seen as a development towards the fuller manifestation of the Eternal within more highly individualised forms' (Elrod, 1981, p.14).

These lectures effectively set the whole tone for the succeeding artistic, literary, and scientific achievements of the Golden Age. Grundtvig, for example, acknowledged that his own thought had been shaped almost entirely by these early lectures of Steffens. Yet it was for their impact on the young poet Oehlenschläger that they are remembered. Oehlenschläger's genius was found in the fact that he was able to cultivate a distinctive form of Danish romanticism through an 'unparalleled versatility in poetry, drama, and prose' which was to shape and give direction to all the subsequent artistic achievements of Denmark's Golden Age (Oakley, 1972, p.168). He continued the work of Johannes Ewald in delving extensively into the myths and ballads of Scandinavian antiquity and tapping them as a poetic resource.

However, he interpreted them in the light of a very distinctive philosophy, believing that the idea of the continuity of the spiritual and earthly realms was to be found in this ancient literature of the past. Thus he saw nature as a symbol in literature for the encompassing spiritual reality with which the individual interacts. Therefore, poetry through its appreciation of nature becomes the means by which the individual may share a personal and mystical union with the living eternal being which permeates the whole of existence. As Bishop Martensen aptly notes of Golden Age culture:

One will undoubtedly admit that in the present cultured world poetry has taken the place of religion in part, because true edification is sought more in the former than in the latter; and this is no wonder, because a stern and sombre view of human nature's infinite distance from divinity, and an inconsoling view of unattainable eternity, are by no means edifying. On the contrary, only that edification is true which brings about a cheerful, encouraging enjoyment of the divine in its presence, and thus really reconciles divinity and man (quoted by Kirmmse, 1977, p.285).

### **cultural elitism**

In view of this, the Golden Age brought with it a new religious awareness with its openness and yearning for metaphysical reality. Yet in Oehlenschläger's case this eventually led to a form of pantheism, as his Jesus - Nature poem of 1805 illustrates.

What is of significance here is that, despite Oehlenschläger's pantheistic beliefs, Bishop Mynster, who adhered strictly to Lutheran Orthodoxy, was able to eulogize him as a 'man of Spirit' and perceive him as a protector of the faith (Kirmmse, 1977, p.229).

This highlights an important aspect of the Golden Age cultural philosophy, that is that form was seen to be more important than substance. The cultural elite of Copenhagen were bound together by a mutual appreciation of culture, and not by a shared system of beliefs. Thus Kirmmse notes, 'there is a form of compromise which one sees again and again in the Golden Age cultural synthesis of Christianity and worldly concerns; again and again, substance, content, and principle, are deemed less important than good form, good taste, and decent order' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.224).

Eventually the absolute nature of the appreciation of art and form, over against content, was expressed in a school of thought called 'poetic realism'. Poetic realism crystallised in an explicit philosophy the underlying assumptions behind much of the artistic expression of Copenhagen after 1825. Thus it gave rise to a very distinctive styles of poetry, such as Henrik Hertz's *Gjenganger-Breve* [Letters of a Ghost - 1830] with its emphasis on the perfection of form over content.

The leader of this movement was Johan Ludvig Heiberg who succeeded Oehlenschläger as the dominant force in Copenhagen's cultural circles. Heiberg as a playwright and professor of literature in the university was responsible for first bringing the influence of Hegel to Denmark. He revised the focus of the romantic vision, turning away from nature towards the development of the human spirit, as the means by which humanity embraces the divine. Under his influence the appreciation of form and style become the essential mark of the sophisticated and educated intellect. Literary and artistic criticism became an art form in itself, Heiberg being considered one of the greatest literary critics that Denmark has ever known.

Yet this school of thought also gave rise to a very distinctive social philosophy, for society was seen as divided into two principal groups: the cultured elite and the uncultured masses. Those who belonged to the cultured elite were seen as living life at a higher level, having been enlightened by the poets and philosophers. The rest of the population, on the other hand, lived at a lower level of consciousness and sophistication. An entry in SK's Journals concerning the derision brought upon him by the Corsair affair, epitomises this elitism:

Wherein lies the annoyance, the vexation ? Not, of course in what is said [for I have often enough said the same myself jokingly] but to whom it is said, and because it has produced a street riot, which has landed me in a crowd with whom I have nothing in common. In company with Jewish commercial-travellers, shopworkers, prostitutes, school-boys, butcher boys, etc. I really cannot laugh at the things which I can very well laugh at in company with Carl Weiss for example. When I laugh with him at my thin legs I thereby presuppose a common intellectual basis. But to laugh over that with the plebes would be to admit to having a basis in common with them (Dru Journals, 1938, p.110).

Kirmmse argues that this cultural elitism was translated by the leading clerics of the time into a distinctive rationale with which to justify the existing social order. He points to Bishop Martensen's, one of the leading figures in the Heiberg circle, belief that the essential difference between poets and philosophers and the rest of society, was that the poet could 'represent the race' and so transcend himself, whereas others could only represent themselves. Thus only the poets and philosophers [the academic elite] could provide the means by which the eternal is imparted to others (Kirmmse, 1977, pp.281-283). Therefore, as it is the role of the religious and political authorities 'to mediate between the realms of the eternal and the temporal', it follows that power in society must belong to the enlightened members of Denmark's aristocracy and cultural elite (Kirmmse, 1977, p.255).

It is interesting to note in view of this, that SK's *Attack* was by its very nature a negation of this cultural elitism. In the crass and often offensive way in which he wrote, he was rejecting the cultural etiquette of the time, an etiquette which he had adhered to impeccably throughout his literary career. He abandoned form and aesthetics in favour of a crude style directed at the common man. The sense of betrayal this caused, in the artistic and intellectual circle round Heiberg of which he was a part, was expressed in a letter by Heiberg's wife when she spoke of SK as that 'unfaithful beast' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.939). Yet SK was not the first person in Danish cultural life to challenge the conservative mainstream of the Golden Age, for N.F.S. Grundtvig had stood in opposition to its cultural ideals for over forty years.

## **nationalism**

Grundtvig represents a radical departure in Danish romanticism which instead of adopting a conservative, elitist position, developed a latent potential in the romantic movement itself - 'cultural nationalism'. To Grundtvig the romantic enthusiasm for the antiquities of Scandinavia, and his feel for the Danish language and its regional dialects, had produced an acute sense of the distinctive cultural identity and heritage of

Denmark. Thus he found in the Nordic myths and legends not only a poetic concept of ultimate reality, but a prophetic vision of national destiny. The whole thrust of his thought and writing of hymns was preoccupied with the notion that Denmark must interpret its future in the light of its past. He made a major contribution to the Golden Age, therefore, through translating the 13th century Scandinavian historians Saxo Grammaticus and Snorri Sturluson (Lindhardt, 1951).

However, his view of culture was in direct opposition to the perspectives held by the cultural mainstream. His interpretation of history necessitated that he reject the elitist idea of Europe as a uniform civilization, a 'polite society' sharing in the same artistic ideals and speaking French which dominated the Golden Age. To Grundtvig the notion of culture did not imply the existence of a class which transcended geographical and political boundaries, but the people of a country, bound to their native soil and 'having an inborn and exclusive understanding of all that had been produced on it' (Thodberg and Thyssen, 1983, p.92). This consciousness of the people was given its most definitive expression in the myths and legends which belonged to that country's past. Thus such myths did not simply speak of what the people were, they spoke of the inherent nature of the nation itself. Each person is not a disembodied ego but a link in a great historical and national chain.

This view came from Grundtvig's specific understanding of human nature as a joining of spirit and clay. The spirit can never be revealed in an undifferentiated form, spirit always appears as clay, as earthbound. Each individual, therefore, is rooted in a specific historical context and is born into a particular culture with its own distinctive language and heritage. This is the clay which the spirit comes to inhabit and shape. As Anders Haarder notes, 'For Grundtvig a nation is a people in which there exists a living and mysterious power that permeates the people from within, creating its history and fashioning its life. The human spirit is always determined as something national. Humanity is not abstract, cosmopolitan, and inter-national in nature but is always something concrete, particular, unique, and limited by history, language and tradition' (quoted by Thodberg and Thyssen, 1983, p.78). The most significant writing in which these ideas are developed is the book *Haandbog i Verdens-Historien* - Handbook of World History - which P.G. Lindhardt describes as, 'like his other historical works, a strange mixture of scholarship, prophetic vision and insanity' (Lindhardt, 1951, p.57).



Gradually, Grundtvig's cultural philosophy began to shape the popular consciousness of many of the new landowners through his writing of hymns and folk songs. His work and influence on the people of Denmark, therefore, went far beyond any other aspect of the Golden Age's cultural expression. It showed vividly the way in which cultural, political and religious ideals were all closely inter-related at this time, for the 'cultural nationalism' of Grundtvig's poetic philosophy quickly translated itself into a nationalistic political movement which challenged the existing social order and provided a vehicle for the rural population's political and religious aspirations. At the heart of these aspirations was the idea that a nation's population as a whole, and not just an intellectual elite, are deemed to be the creator and repository of culture.

Thus Grundtvig constantly found himself in conflict with the Golden Age mainstream, as he challenged the whole premise upon which the cultural elite's influence and position was built - the concept of the enlightened few. As Bishop Mynster in a telling passage in his memoirs states, 'the real, significant, and long-lasting conflict was with the party which I can give no other name than the Grundtvigians' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.243). This statement is even more significant when one considers that Mynster and Grundtvig shared a very similar theological position and outlook. Yet Mynster understood that Grundtvig and the movement he led represented a very real challenge to the power and position of the intellectual and cultural elite of the Golden Age, and it was eventually the nationalism that Grundtvig embodied that acted as a catalyst for the constitutional changes of Denmark in the 1840's.

### **1.3 political context**

When SK began to write the *Attack* in 1854, legislative power in Denmark was shared between the royal cabinet and a newly formed parliament [rigsdag] which comprised of two chambers, the 'landsting' and the 'folketing', both of which were elected by popular vote. The members of the 'landsting' were elected for eight years with a property-owning qualification as a prerequisite for holding a seat, whereas the members of the 'folketing' were elected for a period of three years on the basis of universal male suffrage (Danstrup, 1948, p.108).

Up until 1849, the government of Denmark had comprised of an absolutist monarchy which, with the aid of the Church, had been secured for the crown in 1660. All the departments of state, as well as the department of foreign affairs and the Schleswig-

Holstein duchies and the supreme court, were organised as administrative boards. Proposals from the boards went forward to the King and were debated in his presence by the privy council, whose members were nominated by the King himself, usually from the boards. After the new constitution of 1849 the rigsdag became part of this process.

In 1854 the rigsdag was comprised of three principal parties: the Conservatives, made up mostly of the landowners and all opponents of the free constitution; the National Liberal Burgher party, which had carried through the June constitution; and the left, including the Peasants and the Friends of the Peasants, whose chief aim was continued land reform. These three parties, essentially, embodied the political forces which had come to be at work in Denmark throughout SK's lifetime and with which he was engaged, especially after 1846.

### **National Liberal party**

In the first half of the nineteenth century nationalistic sentiment, together with liberalism, was to prove the most important force in Danish politics. Nationalism was the basic form that the political expression of the emerging farming population took. After the dismal failure of the Napoleonic wars and the subsequent economic collapse of Denmark, there was an incredible receptivity at a grass-roots level to Grundtvig's romantic vision of a return to the Nordic days of glory and power. In hymns such as 'The Land of the Living', 'New year's Morning' and 'Easter Flower', Grundtvig captured this yearning of the rural communities for the promise of spiritual and national resurrection. Yet he was at pains to emphasise that political resurgence was dependent on, and a reflection of, the spiritual life of the nation. Thus to Grundtvig history and politics were the embodiment of God's judgement upon the moral and religious conduct of nations. Therefore, he rhetorically asserted, 'Was there ever a God-fearing people which was annihilated by its enemies ?' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.411).

This particular type of religious and political synthesis enabled the energies of the 'Awakening movements', which had signalled a return to a new form of peasant piety at the beginning of the eighteenth century, to be channelled into nationalistic sentiment. Moreover, with the religious life of the rural community being rooted in the State Church, an increasing number of clergy came to be implicated in Grundtvig's movement. Therefore, throughout 1820-30 the life of the Danish Church was increasingly polarised between the strong conservative establishment and the radical nationalistic populists.



Slowly after 1830 nationalistic sentiment began to be associated more with the liberal, rather than any religious, cause. This was partly because of the influence of English society on Grundtvig, which he found on several visits was characterised by a spirit of liberty and social awareness that he believed was essential for the Danish people to experience (Thodberg and Thyssen, 1983, p.231). Thus 'Grundtvigernism' as a popular movement began to embody not only nationalistic but also liberal sentiments, fighting for educational reform and a new constitution. Meanwhile, liberal ideals had been growing rapidly amongst the shopkeepers and traders of the city. Yet they did not have sufficient public support to effect constitutional change. Therefore, in an attempt to secure the public support of the rural population the liberal cause was merged with that of nationalism, giving rise to the National Liberal Party in 1842.

Eventually the nationalistic sentiment of Denmark came of age in 1849, when it took the country into a war over the territories of Schleswig-Holstein. After the loss of Norway in 1814, Denmark had consisted of three main parts: the kingdom of Denmark itself, and the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. Holstein was linguistically and culturally German and was part of the German confederation. Schleswig, on the other hand, was linguistically and culturally divided between a Danish and a German population. This created considerable tension in the region, and when in the wake of German nationalism there was attempts in 1838 to tie Schleswig to Holstein in a united Germany, it became the focus of Danish nationalism.

Therefore, when in 1842 the National Liberal Party came into being, they insisted that the frontier between Germany and Denmark must in the future, as in the past, be the Eider River on the southern frontier of Schleswig. [The 'Eider Policy' as it was called]. With the National Liberal Government adopting this policy officially in 1848, armed insurrection began in Holstein and Schleswig, helped by the Prussians. The result was three years of bloody civil war [1848-51] which ended inconclusively, Denmark keeping control of Schleswig but only on the condition that it took no further measures to tie the region any closer to itself than to Holstein (Danstrup, 1948, pp.103-105).

To SK the nationalistic cause was an inept form of national self-delusion and the war into which it took the country was an attempt 'to flatter national vanity' (pap.viii 1 A 531 [JP4127]). [The war had severe implications for SK's own lifestyle, as he lost most of his money in government bonds and his trusted servant Andres was called up]. In a sarcastic entry in his Journals, he comments, 'Some of my country men are of the

opinion that Denmark lives by the consumption of the memory of its ancient greatness. This seems to me a strange and ungrateful opinion to which no one can assent who would prefer to be friendly and joyful rather than sullen and refractory' (quoted by Lowrie, 1944, p.12). In another entry he asserts, 'It is obvious that one of the factors in Christ's death was that he repudiated nationalism, wanted to have nothing to do with it' (pap.x 4 A 14 [JP6724]). Yet SK was not untouched by the sense of nationalism which was so prevalent throughout his lifetime, although for him it could never have serious political implications. This nationalism took the form of his love of the Danish language, 'a mother tongue which binds its children with a chain, easy to bear - but hard to break' (quoted by Lowrie, 1944, p.12).

### **liberalism**

Yet it was not just nationalism that shaped the political life of Denmark at this time. When SK went to university in 1830, the fraternity was slowly being divided into two political groupings - the conservatives and the liberals: the liberals encompassing the supporters of Grundtvig and his religious movement, together with those academics influenced by the trends of liberal thought throughout Europe; the conservatives belonging to the cultural elite and the aristocracy. The liberal movement in Denmark had its roots in the considerable frustration in Copenhagen over the political blunders, economic incompetency and social control of conservative absolutism after the economic collapse of 1814. This made large sections of the urban population very receptive to the new ideas coming from France and England concerning democratisation and a free market economy.

At the centre of this new political philosophy was the category of the individual and the 'natural' rights which he possessed. The maximizing of the individual's freedom to think, to believe, to express and discuss his views, to associate in groups, to buy and sell, and to choose his own government, were fundamental to the liberal program of reform. Such rights were not seen as based on a person's social position, but rather rooted in nature itself. Thus Helge Larson argues, that the liberal 'urge to simplify social structures' was part of the nineteenth century reaction against the rationalism of the previous century (Thodberg and Thyssen, 1983, p.49). It was a return to the most basic and simple social category of all, the individual in his relationship to nature. It is, therefore, not surprising that the academic fraternity at the University of Copenhagen, which was saturated with the romantic ideals of Goethe and Schilling, should have proved so receptive to this new political thought. And, in fact, SK's early academic life

was preoccupied with among other things the impact of these new liberal ideas, his first literary venture being the publication of four political articles in Heiberg's conservative journal the Flying Post attacking this new liberal philosophy<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, the combination of liberal political philosophy and Danish nationalism, together with the growing desire of the rising middle classes for greater power and autonomy, effectively laid the foundations for the radical transformation of the Danish constitution. As Danstrup notes:

A younger generation was growing up, burgher sons and undergraduates, individualists and intellectual aristocrats, who had imbibed the ideas of the freedom movements throughout Europe. They were political romantics. They wanted a free constitution and free trade. They were enthusiastic about Norway's free constitution and hostile to the reactionary Great Powers, Russia and Austria, who interfered in Danish affairs. They felt stifled in a small State, scorned by the government's cautious policy of neutrality. Instead they dreamed of a grand and brilliant future, Denmark's national rebirth through the strength of the people, and they were impassioned in their eulogies of the kinship between the Scandinavian peoples (Danstrup, 1948, pp.99-100).

With the July revolution in France in 1830 which secured the political and social ascendancy of the middle-classes, the demand for a liberal constitution in Denmark became increasingly urgent. Eventually in 1834, with Schleswig and Holstein's moves for self-determination and the mounting pressure for reform from within and outside of the government, Frederick VI was forced into establishing four consultative assemblies [staenderforsamlinger] in Schleswig, Holstein, Jutland, and Zealand. Yet the pressure for constitutional reform continued throughout the following decade with a number of liberal journals and newspapers coming into existence, such as the Copenhagen Post, the Courier and the Corsair<sup>3</sup>. The most notable of these publications being The

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<sup>2</sup> In these articles SK adopted a political conservatism. They pointed out that rule by the masses can degenerate into rule by a misguided mob and criticised would be reformers for not having the courage of their convictions. He also developed the idea that government institutions must be appropriate to the history and individuality of the nation involved - (see Arbaugh, 1968, p384). After 1846 SK was similarly engaged by the socialists ideas emerging from Paris, especially the notion of equality - see pap.viii 1 A 268 [JP 63], A 598 [JP 4131], 2 B 76:6,7,9,10,12 [JP 4447]; pap.x 3 A 104 [JP 989], 5 B 117 [JP 2033], 1 A 55 [JP 2769], 4 A 671 [JP 3528], 4 A 41 [JP 4198], 1 A 9 [JP 6299], 2 A 56 [JP 6499].

<sup>3</sup> A paper like the Corsair epitomised what was taking place in Copenhagen's cultural elite at this time, for many leading academics and writers had become sympathetic to the liberal cause. Yet rather than break ranks with the educated bourgeoisie to which they belonged, they anonymously edited papers such as the Corsair which dealt in a form of early

Fatherland [Faedrelandel - established 1834] which severally criticised the absolute monarchy and its conservative administration, providing a forum for liberal ideas.

With the death of Frederick VI in 1839, there was considerable optimism amongst liberal agitators that his successor, Christian VIII, would grant a liberal constitution. However, the conservative establishment, lead by Bishop Mynster, had become increasingly concerned at the political ferment throughout Europe and the instability this had created. Thus Christian adopted a more conservative posture and limited reform to the modernizing of the administration through the granting of independence to various parishes and counties, creating a form of local government. Yet by March 1848 the pressures were such that constitutional reform could no longer be ignored.

When, therefore, governments in France and Germany were overthrown in the February and March of 1848, the newly appointed King of Denmark, Frederick VII, in the face of a mass demonstration on March 21, had little choice but to appoint a predominantly liberal privy council. 'The March Cabinet', as it was called, included the National Liberal leaders, the lawyer Orla Lehmann, and the theologian Ditlev Gothard Monard. Under their influence the establishing of a constitutional assembly in 1849 quickly followed, absolute monarchy being removed and replaced by the June constitution of 1849. SK noted in relation to these events, 'In the course of a couple of months, the past has been ripped away from the present with such passion that it seems like a generation has gone by' (pap.viii 1 A 268 [JP63]).

The dramatic change in Denmark's constitution made a considerable impact on SK, who wrote in his Journals, On May 14, 1847:

Conditions are certain to change, and in the future every effort at reformation, if the man concerned is a true reformer, will be directed against the "masses" not against the government. Government [royal power] is really representation, and to that extent Christian, the dialectic of monarchy is historically both tried and settled. Now we are going to begin at another point, namely upon the intensive development of the state itself....In this respect I attribute great importance to the troubles which are making the round of Europe this year, they show that the European constitution [just as the doctor talks of man's constitution] has changed entirely; in the future we shall have internal troubles, secession in montem sacrum etc (Dru Journals, 1938, p.121).

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tabloid Journalism. The rationale for this was that it was legitimate to spread scandal concerning the aristocracy in order to bring down the establishment. SK's unmasking of the editorial team of the Corsair, P.L. Moller and M.A. Goldschmidt, brought considerable retribution from its pages in 1846.

However, SK's concern was not so much with the political parties and process, but with the role of the State Church and its clergy in the midst of this social ferment. And so, with the completion of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* in 1846, SK's attention turned increasingly away from the problems of the philosophy of Hegel, to the question of the relationship of the Church and Christianity to its social context (see TA, 1978; WL, 1962; PV, 1962; TC, 1967; AUC, 1968)<sup>4</sup>.

## 1.4 religious context

Political and social considerations in nineteenth century Denmark were inextricably bound up with the life of the Lutheran State Church, as is clearly illustrated in the date that SK choose to start the *Attack*. Except for a small minority [Jews and Calvinists], Danish citizenship between 1660-1849 was extended only to baptised and confirmed members of the Church. For the peasant or artisan, this meant that marriage, the right to enter into contractual agreements, access to a guild, and the ability to travel about the country or change one's place of residence were completely dependent upon proving that one was a baptised and confirmed member of the ecclesiastical Establishment. Moreover, for the middle class burghers, these restrictions not only held, but meant further that access to the University, any of the professions, or the vast employment opportunities of the country's bureaucracy were similarly dependent upon the official espousal of State Lutheranism (Kirmmse, 1977, p.52ff.).

Every Dane was also under a theoretical legal obligation to attend Church on Sundays and feast days, though by the late eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries this rule was only nominally enforced (Plekon, 1983, p.263). Therefore, in attacking the Church, and more specifically the ecclesiastical office bearers who embodied the traditional aristocratic-conservative synthesis of religion and state, SK was passing judgement on all the existing social structures of Denmark.

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<sup>4</sup> see pap.viii 1 A 268 [JP 63], A 528 [JP 473], A 258 [JP 787], A 60 [JP 683], A 409 [JP 5017]; pap.x 4 A 15 [JP 708], 5 B 245 [JP 595], 2 A 486 [JP 4177], 2 A 564 [JP 1193], 4 A 531 [JP 2760], 4 A 93 [2960]; pap.xi 1 A 252 [JP 1003], 3 B 177 [JP 2686], 2 A 111 [JP 4501], 1 A 266 [JP 4528], 2 A 296 [JP 6846], II A 11 [6919].

## role of the clergy

The basic assumption behind the Christianity of Golden Age Denmark was that religion and civilization are inseparable, if not inter-changeable. The role, therefore, of the clergy was to sustain and protect the existing social order and its cultural growth. There could be no fundamental conflict between this order and Christianity. As Elrod argues:

Rather than completely overthrowing Lutheran orthodoxy, the Danes chose to associate it with the coming order. Indeed, it could be said that the Danes remained truthful to themselves by creating a society and a culture that represented a synthesis of their past and future. Men like Clausen, H.C. Orsted, Mynster, Treschow, Martensen, Steffens, and the indomitable Grundtvig invited science, political and economic liberalism, and German philosophy into an alliance with Denmark's religious heritage (Elrod, 1981, p.46).

Throughout the absolutist period the clergy functioned, to all intents and purposes, as a branch of the civil service, supported by the government and protecting its interests. In rural districts this meant that local clergy were representatives not only of ecclesiastical, but also of governmental, concerns. In most regions, in addition to his pastoral and liturgical duties, the local parish minister was also responsible for collecting taxes; taking the census; helping administer military levies; keeping the parish register of births, deaths, and taxes; supervising and inspecting local schools; encouraging agricultural innovation; controlling the poor relief system [a position in which the clergy could exercise great discretionary power]; and after 1841, serving as the chairman of councils which had been set up in response to Christian VIII limited local government initiative.

In view of these responsibilities the clergy were invariably drawn from the family of the largest independent farmer. Thus unless a great estate owner lived in the district, 'the social ranking at all local functions began with the parish minister and proceeded downward to the schoolteachers, the independent farmers, the artisans, and the cottagers' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.70). This position of the clergy as the immediate social superiors of the farming population often created considerable resentment which came to be reflected in the anti-clerical bias of the Awakening movements at the end of the eighteenth century.



## theological trends

One of the paradoxes of this period is that as the clergy were influenced by and increasingly embraced the romanticism which characterised the social and cultural life of Denmark, it brought about a return to a more traditional form of Christian belief. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the dominant theological ideas at the University of Copenhagen and amongst the clergy were an expression of 'enlightened rationalism' [Oplysnings teologi]. Denmark's close proximity to Germany and the strong links which existed between the two countries, especially in the academic world, meant that Danish theologians were particularly susceptible to the writings of men such as G.E. Lessing and H.S. Reimarus and their distinctive brand of eighteenth century rationalism. [The extensive treatment of Lessing's work in SK's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* published in 1846, illustrates the importance of these figures in shaping the theological perception in Denmark, even if this was only in terms of a negative reaction].

Shortly after 1800, this rationalist theology began to be challenged. In an attempt to bridge the gap between traditional dogma and rationalism, there was a shift towards a more biblical, orthodox Lutheranism. Theologians like Jens Moller and P.E. Muller, and B.F. Ronne, founder of the Danish Mission Society, began to advocate a form of 'mediation theology' [maeglings teologi] which advocated orthodox Christian beliefs without completely abandoning a rationalist framework. However, for a growing number of clergy, such as Mynster and Grundtvig, mediation theology was seen as an attempt to accommodate eighteenth century rationalism, and it was thought to be a completely inadequate response to the 'spiritlessness' of the bourgeoisie which was believed to be gripping the Church (Plekon, 1983, p.263). For instance, Grundtvig in his trial sermon of 1810, entitled 'Why has the Word of the Lord disappeared from His House?', insisted 'our churches are no longer Christ's for they are dedicated to vain chatter about all sorts of earthly, petty things...shrewd discourses...[and] teachings which are merely the commands of men' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.400).

A reactionary theology, therefore, developed which heralded a return to a strict confessional orthodoxy and laid particular emphasis on personal religious experience and conversion, so completely rejecting the rationalistic, 'impersonal and emotional flatness' of eighteenth century religion (Kirmmse, 1977, p.243). Yet this new found orthodoxy was in many ways not so much a return to New Testament Christianity as a response to the romantic ideals which were shaping the cultural life of Denmark.

The very fact that Steffens, the man who introduced German romanticism to Denmark, was one of the chief advocates of this new orthodoxy in his works such as, *On the False Theology and the True Faith*, very much illustrates this link between romanticism and the new theological orthodoxy (Elrod, 1981, p.30). It, therefore, is not surprising to find that a man such as Grundtvig did not see the promoting of a semi-pagan cultural romanticism as incompatible with the demand for a return to confessional orthodoxy. However, this also meant that the line between this new found orthodoxy and the cultural romanticism and nationalism of the time was at points rather thin. This created an assimilation of the cultural ideals of Golden Age Denmark and what was accepted as orthodox Christian belief.

In the case of both Grundtvig and Mynster, this form of cultural assimilation took place, yet because their understanding of culture was radically different, they stood in religious opposition to one another. In Mynster's case Christian belief was assimilated with the cultural ideals of the Golden Age mainstream. Therefore, throughout his episcopate he was the unofficial chaplain of the cultural elite, while the artistic products of the Golden Age were considered to reflect true Christian virtue. Thus despite Mynster's reputation for impeccable theological orthodoxy and profound piety, men like SK and Grundtvig felt that it was at points impossible to distinguish between his appreciation of culture and Christianity<sup>5</sup>.

Moreover, this also contributed significantly to the oppressive and conservative nature of the Danish Establishment. Mynster believed the civil unrest and social ferment of the rural population, implied a preoccupation with the material world, which was contrary to true spirituality, whereas the artistic productions of the Golden Age were not. To him only that which was able to reflect and appreciate the transcendent, 'the heavenly', was truly Christian. Thus he championed a form of religious personalism and political conservatism, advocating that true spirituality is found through introspection, prayer, and meditation and not through a concern with the 'externals' of this world (Plekon, 1983, p.253).

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<sup>5</sup> Grundtvig, for example, in a damning and somewhat tongue in cheek open letter inquiring after Mynster's 'spiritual health', reports that he has heard it said that Mynster only had 'a certain poetic reverence for the truths of Christianity and that his faith was more 'mediating than believing'. He continues that on going to hear Mynster preach, 'I was not at all edified: indeed I did not even find the sermon Christian, for you wished to speak about "The Necessity of Faith", and spoke only of a faith which has existed and can exist apart from scriptural revelation' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.245).



The assimilation of the cultural ideals of the Golden Age and Christianity, therefore, allowed the established Church to resist and attack the social and political aspirations of the peasant classes as contrary to true religion. On the other hand, Grundtvig represents a completely different direction in the way in which the theological response to rationalism developed. He was just as guilty of the same assimilation of cultural values and Christianity, yet unlike Mynster this took him beyond the narrow confines of Lutheran orthodoxy and towards a militant political stance. To Grundtvig, the political, social, and cultural life of a nation could not be divorced from its spiritual condition. Christianity necessitated change in the social relationships which existed between people and groups (Thodberg and Thyssen, 1983, p.40). He, therefore, brought together a fierce Danish nationalism with a call to biblical Christianity.

Grundtvig presented a picture of Christianity which ran completely contrary to that of Mynster's for rather than the individual finding God in solitude and introspection, He was to be found in the ritual expression of the life of the Christian community. In a pamphlet, *The Church's Reply [Kirkens Genmaele]* in 1825, he argued it is not the New Testament which creates the Church, but the testimony of the Church which creates the New Testament. Thus the basis of faith is found not in the individual's subjective experience or relationship to Christian tradition, but in his or her relationship to the living Word of God rooted in the Christian congregation (Thodberg and Thyssen, 1983, pp.226-234). This 'matchless discovery' as Grundtvig called it, implied Christianity was no longer the possession of an educated elite, the university and ecclesiastical 'interpreter's of scripture', but belonged to the common people. Their access to God was determined not by an understanding of scripture, but by the corporate experience of the community rooted in its cultural and national heritage.

The theological perspectives of both Mynster and Grundtvig dominated the academic and ecclesiastical institutions of Denmark for almost twenty years. Yet after 1840, with the appointment of H.L. Martensen to the chair of Systematic Theology, a Hegelian influence began to shape the direction of theological thought, as it had done other areas of Golden Age culture. Martensen had been significantly impressed by Grundtvig's attempts to emphasise the primacy of the collective dimension of Christianity and reinterpreted this in the light of Hegelian thought. His basic contention was that it is possible to form a synthesis of rationalism and supernaturalism. He argued that the radical separation of faith and knowledge, revelation and reason, nature and the supernatural is unchristian given the Christian notion of the incarnation (Plekon, 1983, p.256). Thus Martensen in his thought, as had Grundtvig and Mynster, provided a

rationale which allowed for the identification of Christianity with society and it was these ideals which shaped the life of the Danish Church after 1849.

## **The Church and the 1849 constitution**

Before 1848 the State Church had always been effectively the church of an absolutist, royal regime, the property of the powerful bureaucrats and of a small educated urban elite. Thus the legitimacy of the State Church in the lives of the common people was limited, and the religious expression of the rural population was often seen to exist outside of the Establishment, particularly after the Awakening movements at the end of the eighteenth century. The common people, therefore, could always dissociate themselves from the shortcomings of the State and its religious embodiment in the Church.

After the constitution of June 1849, however, with the introduction of universal male suffrage, the State, in theory, came to be the property of the Danish people. Although freedom of religion was granted - 'no one can be deprived of full use of his civil and political rights on the basis of religion' - the programme of liberal reform did not extend itself to the State/Church relationship (Kirmmse, 1977, p.151). Thus it followed that the State Church was declared to be the 'People's Church' and as the constitution made clear 'The Evangelical Lutheran Church is the Danish People's Church and as such is supported by the State' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.151). In so doing, Church and State [comprising the whole population, and not just a governing elite] were brought closer together. As Kirmmse notes: '

The formal relationship of the Church to the State did not change at all after 1848-9, and the personnel, procedures, and the socially supportive "cultural" functions of the Church were likewise unchanged. But now, in the moral and political sense, the Church had been bound more tightly than ever to the State, and both of them had been made the inalienable moral and political property of the common man, whether he wanted this burden or not (Kirmmse, 1977, p.742).

Yet this also created a power struggle within the Church as the ordained ministry who primarily represented the academic and cultural elite of Denmark, endeavoured to protect their position and power in face of the dramatic social changes taking place. Many felt that the ecclesiastical patterns previously used to express the interests of a governing elite were no longer appropriate, and a new model of ordained ministry was needed to accommodate the religious aspirations of the common people. Therefore,

extensive discussion on the structure of the Church began to take place after 1849, with leading ecclesiastical figures such as Dr Rudelbach, Bishop Lindenberg, Prof. H.N. Clausen and Grundtvig agitating for change.

Grundtvig, for example, stressed the fact that the clergy continued to operate with an inappropriate model of ministry, behaving 'as if the so called "People's Church" had inherited from the old State Church a certain right of compulsion over the Danish people, and so priests continue to report those who refuse to allow their children to be baptised, who do not get confirmed by age eighteen, and so on, to the legal, civil authorities. If we wish to have a genuine people's church, we must make the situation within that church a matter of freedom, [because] even the most divine words of institution must lose all their blessedness in the eyes of those upon whom they are forced or pressed in worldly or civil fashion' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.430).

SK's work, after 1848, shows an increasing awareness of this debate within the Danish Church, so much so, that he was perceived through works such as *Training in Christianity* [1850], and *For Self-examination* [1851] to be an advocate of the reform process. Yet in an open letter in the Fatherland to Dr Rudelbach on January 31, 1851 [his first dealings with the press since January 1846], who had seen an ally in SK's writings for his proposed reforms, SK made it clear that his concern was not with the 'externals' of the Church, but the re-introduction of Christianity into Christendom (AN, 1968, p.52). That is to say, SK had seen beyond the parochial concerns of church government and recognised that the question was one of the whole nature of religious awareness in the evolving modern world and the way in which clerical authority is legitimated.

In one of his last Journal entries he stated, 'My task is to make room so that God can have access' (pap.xi 1 A 250 [JP6936]). It was this 'de-secularising impulse' which was motivating SK's thought after 1849, for he believed what was embodied in the constitution was not the State's embracing of religion [a thing which he constantly reiterated he was not in opposition to], but the secularisation of the Church. The basis by which the clergy legitimated their power and position, therefore, was rooted not in Christian ideals, but in secular values. As he writes:

Christianity in Christendom fares as a weak child who is given something and then a couple of stronger children come and grab it. These all too intensely secularised people whose life and way of thinking are secular, they take possession of Christianity, grab all its consolation served up in the form of human sympathy - and those unfortunate persons who especially ought to have the benefit of Christianity are shoved aside (Pap.x 2 A 27 [JP386]).

To SK, therefore, the State Church was no longer the vehicle for authentic Christianity but simply the vested interests of the clergy themselves.

Nothing epitomized this more for SK, than the way in which liberal political ideals had been merged with Christian practice and belief by leading figures in the Church, such as Clausen and Grundtvig. In his letter to Rudelbach he criticises this 'jumbling together of politics and Christianity' for the Church in so doing had become an institution which was only concerned with temporal and external ends (AN, pp.52-53). It had lost its sense of transcendence and its ability to transform society through identifying its source of authority in the socio-political order, rather than its ethico-religious ideals to which it supposedly adhered. Yet SK was not advocating the separation of politics and religion, for like Grundtvig he believed that one's relationship to God cannot be divorced from one's relationship to others (PV, 1962). What he did take exception to, was the negation of the ethico-religious character and elements in the identity of the Church through an embracing of secular socio-political values and ends. Religion, for SK, should always act as the basis of the socio-political order, and not vice-versa.

## **1.5 'Attack Upon Christendom' and its context**

In 1849 with the new constitution tying the Church to the people of Denmark in a way that it had not previously done, SK feared that secular realities would shape religious perception, reflecting the way in which Christianity had come to embrace the bourgeois values and political interests of the liberal establishment. His polemic was, therefore, directed against the emerging new order and the secularising forces at work within the Church. 'Christendom is not simply the State Church; it is the modern liberal state, which is legitimised and sanctioned by religion' (Elrod, 1981, p.78). To SK the merging of this new social order and Christianity was to negate Christianity itself, because he believed there was a fundamental tension between the values of the bourgeoisie and those of Christ.

Christianity held to, and taught the worth and significance of the single individual before God, who was the focus of His love and forgiveness. It was in the single individual that the eternal and the divine inhabited. However, the new order was seen by SK to negate this significance and worth and to turn the individual into something which was exploited and manipulated for profit and power. The vast numbers of urban poor that SK was daily confronted with and which increasingly filled the pages of his journals, bearing witness to this very fact. Yet the Church had simply reproduced these same values. Grundtvig, according to SK, used the people as a means to forward his own political and ecclesiastical ambitions, while the rest of the clergy sought to live off the large incomes of their wealthy congregations:

Here is another peculiarity in Christendom. If Christianity relates to anyone in particular, then it may especially be said to belong to the suffering, the poor, the sick, the leprous, the mentally ill, and so on, to sinners, criminals. Now see what they have done to them in Christendom, see how they have been removed from life so as not to disturb - earnest Christendom. Rarely do they have a pastor, and then he is a mediocre one. Christ did not separate them in this way; it was for them especially that he was a pastor. The pastors, however, go on living in secular security; there they decorate life; 'they assuage the sorrows and ennoble the joys' - this they do, and most curious of all, they do it according to a fixed price (pap.x 2 A 27 [JP386]).

The reason for this 'devaluing' of the individual is found in an unconscious implication of the democratic system itself. For, although, democracy is supposedly built around the freedom of the individual, it negates personal worth, in that the individual's significance is primarily interpreted in relation to corporate realities (pap.x 6 A 385 [JP 1617], 1 A 286 [JP 2016], 2 A 7, 394 [JP 4166, 4173], 3 A 231 [JP 2165], 5 A 133 [JP 4295], 4 A391 [JP 4880]; pap.xi 1 A 352, 516, 517, 453 [JP 4885, 4911, 4912, 4941]). The individual's significance and worth is no longer intrinsic to the person, but is determined by the social and corporate entities in relation to which he or she exists. Thus SK points out:

None has more contempt for what it is to be a man than they who make it their profession to lead the crowd. Let some one approach a person of this sort, some individual - that is an affair far too small for his attention, and he proudly repels him. There must be hundreds at the least. And when there are thousands, he defers to the crowd, bowing and scraping to them (PV, 1962, p.114).

This in terms of society leads to the exploitation of those that are considered to have less social significance than others. Yet in terms of the Church it undermines the

principle of God's unconditional love for each and every person in and of themselves (pap.X 2 A 420 [JP 514], 10 [JP 6489], 359 [JP 1409]; pap.xi 1 A 422 [JP 4715]).

Moreover, it confuses the distinction between religion as an absolute and prior commitment of the individual to God, and religion as a socially supportive public institution. This confusion SK believed was to be found in the Christianity of Denmark after 1849. Just as 'the masses, the numbers, the public are themselves the powers of salvation' in the new social order, so the 'People's Church', the social order and Christianity being synonymous, teaches by implication that the individual's significance in relation to God is found only through the Church. To SK, apart from the power this gave to the clergy through their monopoly of the religious life of the nation, it was also capable of cutting the people of Denmark off from their own religious possibilities as the nature of God's relationship to, and love for, the individual was obscured by the ecclesiastical authorities and the illusion that one may only encounter God through the impersonal forces at work in the Church (Dru Journals, 1938, p.125). It is, therefore, significant, in this regard, to note Plekon's suggestion that SK's understanding of God's love and forgiveness was critical in the formation of the 'Attack' and that often these have been obscured by the negative elements of his critique (Plekon, 1982, p.48).

In SK's eyes, therefore, the shaping of Christianity and the work of the clergy by the new social order and its bourgeoisie values brought a form of religious oppression. In the negation of the distinction between Christian and bourgeoisie values, the distinctive religious possibilities of the individual were lost, and so the individual was condemned to the vacuous spiritual existence of the 'masses'. This loss of religious awareness was of great consequence to SK, because he believed that no matter what form political realities take, the potential of tyranny always exists, (Kirmmse, 1977, p.ii). He feared that the new era into which Denmark was entering would be marked by the de-personalising of individuals, and the 'levelling process' taking away the ability to act. Thus just as in the tyranny of kings there was the threat of de-humanisation, so in the new democratic era there was this same threat through the loss of personal worth, identity and spiritual awareness.

Yet SK was 'convinced that if only each human being could be helped to become conscious of himself as standing 'before God', strictly accountable to God and deeply loved by that God to whom he is precious as a unique and irreplaceable individual, the impersonal thing called "the public" would disappear. Instead of anonymous, irresponsible masses, there would be persons personally related to the personal God, a



God of justice and love who demands the transformation of society and provides resources for its renewal' (quoted by Johnson, 1962, p.80).

What he believed was required was a new model of ministry for a democratic and a secular [spiritless] age, which would call society back to a true understanding of the individual's significance before God. He insisted, 'If there is to be real victory, it must happen by means of priests; neither soldiers or police officers nor diplomats nor political projectmakers will be capable of it. Priests will be required...who can break up the "masses" and make them into individual persons' (pap.viii, 4 A 345 [JP5643]). To achieve this victory, he believed, the distinction between the bourgeoisie values of the time and the reality of Christianity must be established. And the reluctance of the clergy to do this, which SK saw as an attempt to protect their own professional position and power, eventually brought about the *Attack Upon Christendom*.

## Conclusion

The Danish literary historian, Paul Rubow, stresses, 'One cannot understand either Kierkegaard or the Copenhagen intellectual life of the years 1830-50 in isolation from each other. The great poet and thinker did not distance himself from his city, historical period or its language' (quoted by Plekon, 1983, p.246). *The Attack upon Christendom* epitomises this fact more than any other of SK's works. It reflects the political and social tension in Danish society that had given rise to a new academic and artistic elite that dominated the life of the Church and society. Moreover, it expresses the struggle for power and position in the Danish Church in the wake of changing socio-political values and social structures.

In this regard, it becomes apparent that SK's denunciations of 'shop-keeper', profit seeking priests and the respectable and affluent who comfort themselves with piety while treating the poor and the sick with contempt were directed not at the old order of Christendom, but at the new democratic age and the Church's relationship to its bourgeoisie mentality. SK's task was, therefore, in the face of radical political and social change, to address the relationship of Christianity to the changing social and political realities of the democratic era. In view of this, he called for a new model of ministry which challenged the accepted social order and its values. In so doing, he was part of a general trend in the religious life of Golden Age Denmark which, influenced by the romantic movement, had embodied a 'de-secularising impulse' which had attempted to 'awaken, renew and reform Christian faith and practice' (Plekon, 1983, p248).



## Chapter Two

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# Interpreting Kierkegaard

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Chapter one suggested that SK and his *Attack* cannot be understood in isolation from the socio-political context in which it was written. The *Attack* was a response to, and came out of SK's reflection on, the dramatic changes taking place in Danish society in the 1840's. Yet the interpretation of the *Attack* has also proved problematic at a number of other levels. The incongruity of the work with SK's other writings and the radical thrust of his later thought has been difficult to reconcile with the traditional interpretations of SK and his individualistic and subjective emphasis. Possibly more than any of his other writings, the *Attack* and its place in the Kierkegaardian corpus has been the subject of considerable discussion. In this chapter, I want to address some of the issues of interpretation and examine how the *Attack* is related to SK's own life and wider thought.

### SK and the 'Attack'.

On 18 December 1854, SK began his attack on the Danish Church, with a vicious indictment of the recently deceased primate, Bishop Mynster. Thereafter, until 26 May 1855, this denunciation continued in the liberal newspaper, *The Fatherland*, with the publication of twenty-one articles. There then followed nine editions of the *Instant*, a small pamphlet published by SK himself which maintained this vitriolic between 26 May and 25 September 1855. [a tenth was prepared, but left unpublished]. Three other articles also appeared during this period: *This Has To Be Said - So Be It Now Said*, *What Christ's Judgement Is About Official Christianity*, and *The Unchangeableness of God*. A significant body of literature, therefore, emerged in a matter of a few months, that subsequently came to be collected and known as SK's *Attack Upon Christendom*.

SK was considered one of the strongest supporters of Bishop Mynster and the Lutheran State Church, so very few of his contemporaries were prepared for, or could make much sense of, the ruthless denunciations of the revered Bishop and the relentless invective directed at the Danish Church's ordained ministry. Bishop N.H. Clausen dismissed it as a piece of 'sickly, ecstatic excitement', along with most of Copenhagen's academic and cultural elite, while Grundtvig branded SK a 'blasphemer' and an 'anti-Christ' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.939).

However, the strongest emotion was one of bewilderment. For although the attack was far from unique in the midst of the ecclesiastical turmoil which inflicted the Danish Church, it was exceptional because of SK's previously conservative position (Plekon, 1982b, p.331). Very few, therefore, were able to grasp and understand what purpose it served, and many thought SK's mind had snapped and exploded in a frenzy of hatred towards Copenhagen's cultural and academic elite. Bishop Martensen, Mynster's successor, for example, records in his memoirs that he saw in the violent outburst the result of an emotional breakdown, which in part accounted for his reluctance to publicly refute and denounce SK's position (Plekon, 1982b, p.331).

Yet not every one in the respectable circles of Copenhagen saw SK as a 'misanthropic crackpot'. For instance, Fru Andrae, the wife of the liberal finance minister, wrote in her diary, at the end of SK's life, 'SK lies in the hospital...very sick....This awakens concern doubly at this time, because, with his writings against Mynster, Martensen, and the clergy - or perhaps to express it better, against the whole outer form of the worship of God - he has aroused a great sensation, and it is certain that his writings, which have a large readership, including many theologians, will one day sooner or later, have a revolutionary impact upon matters of the Church' (quoted by Kirmmse, 1977, p.940).

## **2.1 the problematic nature of interpretation.**

A number of reasons account for much of the confusion which surrounded SK's writings towards the end of his life. The most obvious one is the very distinctive style, language, and medium used sets it completely apart from the rest of SK's work. Unlike his other writings, the publications which made up the attack were directed at the 'man in the street', rather than the academic and cultural elite of Copenhagen. No attempt is made to present his position in a systematic or balanced way. The articles employ a

provocative style, using stark and simplistic language, with a number of sweeping generalisations. This exaggerated style, although engaging, obscures the continuity and essence of much of his thought. Moreover, this problem is aggravated further by the literary medium that is used, for SK's decision to use newspaper articles and tracts to reach the widest possible audience means that a fragmented picture is given, providing only brief glimpses of his thought as a whole (see pap.xi 3 B 120 [JP6957]).

## coherence

The first problem, therefore, one is confronted with in interpreting the *Attack* is that it is not an academic treatise, but an emotive polemic designed to stir the hearts of the common people. Unlike some of SK's other writings, it is a series of conclusions, rather than a systematic presentation of a particular argument. It is a barrage of observations, illustrations, and criticisms that set out to demonstrate 'Christianity does not exist in Denmark', while no attempt is made to explain or justify the conceptual framework out of which the critique arises (AUC, 1968, pp.32-33).

In view of this, Nordentoft argues the *Attack* provides a description of what SK's understanding of Christianity is not, rather than what it is. There is nothing to indicate conclusively whether one is reading the work of an agnostic, a spiritual atomist, or a devotee 'orthodox' Christian - and the *Attack* has been interpreted in all three of these ways<sup>1</sup>. It gives a very fragmented and ambiguous insight into SK's thought which Nordentoft claims can only be understood in 'negative' terms. For instance, the critique calls for an end to 'official Christianity', yet it leaves no significant plans for external reform or any unambivalent ideas about the future shape of the church or society or even whether SK believes in the future of Christianity itself (Nordentoft, 1978, p.278).

Nordentoft, therefore, rightly insists one cannot interpret SK simply from reading the documents which make up the *Attack* itself. The *Attack* needs to be read and understood in relation to other sources of SK's thought. For instance, one cannot interpret this polemic without first understanding SK's perception of Christianity.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Lowrie names Brandes, Brochner, Hoffding, and Schrempf among early scholars who leaned in the direction of interpreting the *Attack* in terms of SK's existentialism breaking with his Christian belief. [Lowrie, 1944, pp3-6]. More recently Karl Jaspers and Colin Wilson have both followed a similar line of interpretation. see (PA, 1962, pp.11-12). The idea of SK as a 'spiritual atomist' is developed by (Eller, 1968, pp.30-31).

## continuity

Yet this leads to a second problem. The *Attack* relationship to the rest of SK's work has been considered problematic ever since it was first published. Some scholars have argued that in view of the sharp contrast in style and the 'crude and legalistic' fanaticism of the work, it represents a major departure from the conservative, individualistic and subjective 'Christian humanism' in the rest of his thought (see Soe 1956; Gustaffon 1962; Lindstorm 1956; Lindhardt 1955, 1958, and Slok 1978). As Plekon notes:

Not a few scholars have muttered, off the record, that the ranting and ravings in the late journals, the raw material for the public attack literature, are decidedly inferior to the earlier writings and ought to be ignored. I have even heard one express the wish that Barfod, the first editor of SK's manuscripts, had exercised even greater liberality with his scissors when assembling the journal manuscripts for publication' (Plekon, 1982b, p.331).

However, others such as Walter Lowrie have argued the *Attack* is 'the consistent conclusion of SK's life and thought' (AUC, 1968, p.xiii). And some have even gone as far as to suggest one can only understand the early writings of SK in the light of his later works (Eller, 1968; Kirmmse, 1977).

If, as scholars such as Soe and Lindhardt have argued, the *Attack* reflects a radical discontinuity in SK's thought, then it would seem it is impossible to provide an adequate frame of reference with which to interpret it. It is simply an unbalanced and negative piece of writing that is of little value in studying the Kierkegaardian corpus. As Soe himself suggests it would have been better for SK to have died earlier, than to have given posterity such an unfortunate and crude piece of writing (Soe, 1956). Yet if some form of continuity is established, then the *Attack* takes on a new significance as the culminating work of SK's life and thought.

The issue of continuity and the relationship of the *Attack* to the rest of SK's work, therefore, is a critical question for the interpretation of the *Attack*. Yet the question of continuity is not only confined to the consideration of the relationship of the *Attack* to SK's other works. It also exists in relation to the various elements of the critique itself. As Diem argues, the polemic expresses SK's dialectic methodology (Diem, 1959, p.81ff). It evolved and progressed as SK inter-acted with, and responded to, the Danish Establishment and the changing social realities around him.

Thus the *Attack* would appear to be in a state of flux, SK's thought evolving and even changing within the *Attack* itself (Plekon, 1982a). For instance, the progression in his thought makes it difficult to determine whether the *Attack* is providing a defence of the Establishment, as Diem argues, or is advocating disestablishmentarianism, as Kirmmse suggests (Diem, 1959, pp.103-124; Kirmmse 1977). A progressive and dialectic tendency is inherent within the polemical nature of the work, as it represents a response to the changing situation in which SK is writing (AUC, 1968, pp.67-72). Yet this also means that to interpret the *Attack* one must be aware of the progressive and changing nature of SK's thought, and understand the process by which this evolves.

## context

However, this takes us to a third area of consideration. That is, the biographical and contextual influences on SK's work, for his own life experience very much shaped and determined the direction of his thought. As SK himself wrote, 'An understanding of the totality of my work as an author, its maieutic purpose, etc. requires also an understanding of my personal existence [Existeren] as an author, what I qua author have done with my personal existence to support it, illuminate it, conceal it, give it direction' (pap.x 1 A 146 [JP6360]).

To SK a true understanding of human existence is only found when one is engaged by, and writes out of, that existence (see Lowrie, 1938). Religious knowledge, as distinct from other forms of knowledge, always begins with the 'particular' and the concrete, and in this is found the 'universal' and the 'absolute' (see pap.vii 1 A 126 [JP5913], pap.x 4 A 32, 1 A 430, 1 A 485 [JP1086, 975, 2607], pap.xi 2 A 382 [JP4816]). Diem calls this 'SK's dialectic of existence', intellectual formulations being an expression of one's encounters with existence itself (Diem, 1959). Thus the individual and his experience of existence, rather than abstract social and philosophical construction, always provided SK's point of departure. At a purely mundane level this led to the pseudonymous works being full of cryptic messages and reflections on SK's own personal life, but it also means that his work resisted a purely abstract and theoretical form.

Therefore, in interpreting SK careful consideration needs to be given to biographical detail. For he wrote as one engaged by, and deeply concerned with, his own existence. His writings act as an expression of his own religious pilgrimage, the *Attack* reflecting his personal struggles with Mynster, the question of ordination, and his own religious

upbringing. Yet in saying this, one must also avoid the excess of this approach in the interpretation of SK, by recognising that his life was the occasion, but not the explanation of his thought.

Thus accepting the fact that any legitimate discussion of the meaning of the *Attack* must take into account the fundamental problems of interpreting SK's work, in the rest of this chapter I propose to look at each of these various elements and examine the implications which they have for understanding his thought. Beginning with a look at the distinctive forces which shaped SK's own Christian experience, I intend to go on and examine how SK's ideas evolved, and what eventually came to be his understanding of the nature of Christianity.

I will argue that the principal themes of SK's work are fundamentally shaped by, and in response to, the influences that he encountered in his own life and religious upbringing, and that the apparent difference between SK's earlier and later writings is not as great as the change in style and tone would suggest. Finally, I will argue that the *Attack* should be interpreted as a theological response to the changing socio-economic context in which SK wrote, and so provides us with important insights into the question of clerical professional self-interests and identity.

## 2.2 life and work

SK was born into a family of peasant stock. His father, Michael Pedersen, had originally come from Saeding on the Jutland peninsula, and had worked his way up from the deprivation of a peasant life to being one of Copenhagen's most successful merchants (Lowrie, 1942, pp.3-30). His mother, Michael's second wife, had come from the same Jutland peninsula to work as a servant girl in his father's large New Market [Nytorg] mansion. Yet a sexual indiscretion by Michael, just after his first wife had died, forced him into marrying, a daughter, Maren Kirsten, being born to them on 7 September 1797, just four months and eleven days after their wedding.

The immoral union between Anne Søren-datter Lund and Michael Kierkegaard had a devastating effect on the life of the family<sup>2</sup>. So much so, SK always believed that his birth on the 5 May 1813 was in a sense illegitimate, if not in the eyes of society,

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<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that SK never once in his vast collection of journals mentions his mother.



certainly in the eyes of God. In his very last journal entry, on 25 September 1855, he wrote:

I came into existence [er blevet til] through a crime, *I came into existence against God's will*. The guilt, which in one sense is not mine even though it makes me an offender in God's eyes, is to give life. The punishment corresponds to the guilt: to be deprived of all zest for life, to be led into the most extreme life-weariness. Man wants to dabble in the creator's activity, if not by creating man, at least by giving life. Yet you certainly must pay for this... (pap.xi 2 A 439 [JP6969] - italics mine)<sup>3</sup>.

The psychological impact of this sense of guilt cannot be over estimated, and it probably was the reason behind SK's infamous breaking of his engagement with Regina Olsen in 1841. It certainly gave rise to the belief within the family that all of Michael's seven children, conceived out of this union, would die before he did. Thus when SK's father did die on the 8 August 1838, it provided, somewhat ironically, the occasion for the title of SK's first published work on 7 September 1838 - *From the Papers of One Still Living*.

However, despite the shadow of this family guilt, his father's wealth enabled both SK and his brother to embark on academic careers and enjoy the position and influence of Copenhagen's cultural and academic elite. SK, in particular, on entering the University of Copenhagen in October, 1830, embraced all the new found ideals of Denmark's Golden Age with its love of romantic literature, art and theatre, and its veneration of form and beauty.

### **pietistic and peasant origins**

Yet a latent tension always existed between the values of the academic-cultural elite to which SK belonged and his humble origins. SK's family came from that part of south Jutland that was the centre of the Herrnhutterite [Moravian] presence in rural Denmark. This was a movement of 'primitive and emotional' lay piety that had taken root in Denmark through the work of the German, Count Zinzendorf [1700-1760]. The movement was part of a reaction against the Lutheran emphasis on faith, at the expense of life and work. It played down the sola fideism of the Reformation's theology, and seized upon other Reformation doctrines. It focused on such 'anti-

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<sup>3</sup> Lowrie notes the horror in SK's mind concerning his father's sin - 'This man who was his father had violated his mother when she was a virgin ! His mother ! Horrible ! His father had seduced a servant-maid who was entirely dependent upon him. And it was out of this union that he had come' (Lowrie, 1944, p.75).



institutional' ideas as the permissibility of lay preaching and the priesthood of all believers, together with an 'anti-intellectual' emphasis on religious emotions and visible sanctification (Kirmmse, 1977, p.65ff.).

Danish Herrnhuterism, therefore, represented a radical form of Lutheran pietism which completely rejected the tendency to equate faith with intellectual assent to true doctrine. They also emphasised personal piety and the importance of religious conversion, 'the forcing of the individual to an either/or decision for Christ', as well as stressing the personal appropriation rather than the critical exegesis of Scripture. Yet the Herrnhutterites [the name is derived from the Christian community which Zinzendorf formed with a group of Bohemian Protestant refugees], went much further than other forms of pietism in stressing 'deep mystical, spiritual, experiential faith' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.64).

The emotive image of 'the suffering Redeemer Christ covered with blood, His wounds, suffering and death' was at the heart of Herrnhutterites religious consciousness. So much so, one leading scholar of Danish Herrnhuterism notes that it was common practice to teach their children to burst into tears at the thought of the Saviour's love through showing them horrific pictures of the crucifixion<sup>4</sup>. The sect believed the purpose of religion was to call forth conversion and to produce visible signs of sanctification through emotive images, rather than reasoned argument (Norman, 1974, p.676). Thus they replaced doctrinal substance with a highly emotive 'blood theology' designed to elicit a purely emotional response.

It was this radical stream of Christian witness that provided the religious background for SK and his family. SK's father, shortly after arriving in Copenhagen, became involved with the 'Congregation of Brothers', a Herrnhutterite lay meeting in the city. Documents show that SK's father became one of the leading figures in this congregation, and in 1816 when they required a new meeting house to seat over 600, he directed the project (Kirmmse, 1977, p.69).

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<sup>4</sup> In a number of places in his work SK describes the way in which he was shown pictures of the crucifixion as a young child. In one auto-biographical piece in Two Ethico-Religious Treatises, he writes, 'Once upon a time there was a man. As a boy, he was strictly brought up in the Christian religion. He had not heard much about that which other children commonly hear, about the little Jesus, about the angels, and such like. On the other hand they showed him all the more frequently the Crucified, so that this picture was the only one he had, the only impression he had of the Saviour. Although only a child, he was already as old as an old man' (Lowrie, 1942, p50).

Yet the involvement of SK's father in this lay meeting became increasingly problematic as his socio-economic position changed, for it became difficult to reconcile his involvement with 'a sect which served as the vehicle for the urban acculturation of stubborn and vocal forms of peasant religious radicalism' and his position as a respectable member of Golden Age society (Kirmmse, 1977, p.66).

A tension, therefore, developed in the religious and social self-understanding of the Kierkegaards as their social position could no longer be reconciled with their rural and peasant roots, this being vividly illustrated in the family's pattern of Church attendance. On Sunday mornings, they would go to Mynster's services in Copenhagen's principal church, the Church of Our Lady, with the rest of Denmark's academic and cultural elite, while in the evening they met together with the Congregation of Brothers, a meeting made up primarily of country peasants and the dispossessed of Danish society.

This tension in the social and religious identity of his family deeply effected SK. For apart from being subject to a strict Herrnhutterite religious education, it also generated a sense of standing apart from the rest of society. For instance, although SK went to one of the most prestigious schools in Copenhagen, he was forced to wear clothes traditionally associated with Herrnhutterite rural communities. As one of his classmates, Welding, Dean of Viborg, writes, 'To the rest of us who led a genuinely boyish life SK was a stranger and an object of compassion, especially on account of his dress, always the same, made of rough cloth of a dark mixed colour and a very peculiar cut, the coat having short skirts. He wore heavy woollen stockings and shoes, never boots. This procured him the nickname of Choirboy [because it resembled the costume in charity schools]' (Lowrie, 1944, p.39).

As with many others brought up in this strict and harsh sectarian regime, as soon as he was able SK abandoned this pietistic and primitive religion. Yet despite being completely absorbed for several years in the cultural and academic world of Copenhagen and its romantic influences, he never completely broke free of his pietistic origins. When in 1838, therefore, he had the first of several religious experiences that were to mark his Christian pilgrimage, he again returned to the religious influences of his youth. As he noted, 'The powerful religious impression of my childhood has acquired a renewed power over me, now softened by reflection' (Lowrie, 1944, p.105).

Therefore, although SK never returned to the strict pietism of his father, his life and work are marked by a tension between the romantic and rationalistic world of the Golden Age to which he belonged and the radical forces which shaped his Christian experience and childhood. And although he tried to reconcile these, he was never able to resolve this fundamental conflict within himself until the end of his life. As Kirmmse notes:

There was a tension in the religious life [and probably the social self-understanding] of the Kierkegaard's family, a tension between rural and urban religion, between peasant pietism and Golden Age oratory, and this tension, never resolved by the father, was resolved in different ways by the two sons who survived him, Peter Christian, the Grundtvigan, and Soren the enemy of the officially Christian society of the Golden Age (Kirmmse, 1977, p.491).

### **pietistic influences on SK's thought**

In view of this, two important considerations need to be made in interpreting SK.

Firstly, although his work clearly transcends any one specific Christian tradition, there is considerable justification for the argument, first put forward by Emil Brunner, that he be understood and read primarily within the context of eighteenth century continental Pietism (Brunner, 1943, p.112). Eller, more recently, develops this thesis in far greater detail (Eller, 1968). For as Seyppel has noted it appears 'the Dane's favourite expressions, like, for example, "existence" and "reality", are inexplicable without a reference to the ideas of Pietism' (Seyppel, 1961, p.129).

For instance, this pietistic influence is very apparent in a number of areas, but particularly in regard to SK's understanding of Christian faith. SK's work draws a distinction between faith in terms of detached intellectual assent and that which is appropriated by, and engages, the individual. This provides the basis for SK's distinction between 'historical' and 'religious' knowledge' in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. He argues that whereas one is detached and objective, the other must always be subjective and appropriated by the individual (CUP, 1941, pp.115-119, 180-187, 248-251, 508-515). Yet it also influenced the formulation of SK's concept of the counterfeit Christianity of Christendom, for just as Luther insisted a purely intellectual and theoretical understanding of faith, devoid of personal appropriation, stands in complete opposition to the true nature of Christian faith, so SK denounced the religion of Denmark in similar terms.

A pietistic influence is also very noticeable in SK's Christology. The incarnation, the point at which God is reconciled to humanity through becoming man, is seen to be beyond intellectual comprehension. It is the 'absurd' (PF, 1985, pp.34-37, 46 -59, 115-118). One cannot respond to the Christ-event in terms of intellectual assent, for the mind cannot grasp the nature of the 'God-man'. Thus a person's response to Christ finds its basis in their emotions, in religious affections. The Christ-event is not an intellectual concept, for the human mind cannot comprehend it, but an emotive force. It elicits the 'passion of faith', as SK calls it. A person's Christian experience, therefore, bases itself on 'a passionate movement' through which one reacts to, and takes hold of, the nature of Christ in relation to oneself.

Yet as one's affections are seen by SK to be the basis of human violation - one chooses what one desires, not unlike the concept found in pietistic forms of thought - this 'act of passion' must always be 'an act of choice'. The emotive force of Christ demonstrates itself through an act of choice. That is to say, the Christ-event, because of its very nature, demands a response of the human will. It brings a person to a point of decision. It confronts the individual with a choice, an *Either/Or* for no neutrality is possible in relation to the self-revelation of God in Christ. For SK anyone who holds only an intellectual perception of Christ does not understand his true nature, for he demands a response of the whole person. Thus a form of religion that makes Christ an object of knowledge, rather than an emotive presence that acts as a catalyst for social change, suppresses the true nature of Christianity and presents a distorted picture of Christ.

Thus this leads to one further area in which SK's thought was significantly influenced by pietistic ideals, that is, the nature of Christian witness in society. SK embraced the pietistic principle that one cannot encounter Christ without it challenging the way in which one lives and the values which one holds. As Luther notes, '[If goodworks] do not follow, faith is surely not present; for where faith is, there the Holy Ghost is and must work love and good works' (Luther, 1988, p.21). Thus the nature of Christian faith is such that it must be expressed in a visible response in the midst of society.

In view of this, SK began to explore in his work what a person's Christian commitment meant in terms of his or her social relations, looking specifically at how one demonstrates the outworking of the relationship between temporal and eternal concerns in everyday life. For instance, he writes:

The expression which the Middle Ages insisted upon - going into the monastery, fasting, praying asceticism, and the like has been thrown out. The Christian must remain in the world, it is said. But then he must express that he is a Christian in his occupation , etc. Take a merchant . He is a Christian. Consequently he ought to express that he is a Christian by not getting mixed up in this gay dishonesty which is the normal thing in the commercial world but ought to strive for the kind of conscientiousness which is truly Christian. Fine, but then after a time he will also shut up shop and will be branded a traitor by the other merchants . But, they say, he is carrying it too far, he must be like the others - aha, there the expression for what it is to be a Christian disappeared (pap.x 3 A 401 [JP5014]).

SK, therefore, believed the very nature of one's encounter with Christ brings one into a place of conflict with those things that are controlled solely by temporal and finite concerns. In turn, this becomes a mark of an authentic Christian witness. SK emphasised this to such an extent that for him martyrdom became the ultimate form of witness, for in dying for what one believes one is demonstrating with one's life that the temporal is subordinate to one's desire for the absolute.

If read in the context of Continental Pietism, therefore, SK's thought is seen to be built around the notion that the very nature of Christ demands a response in the midst of society. A response that negates a purely pragmatic and relativistic functioning of society, and affirms absolute values. As SK himself insists:

Yes, indeed, pietism [properly understood, not simply in the sense of abstaining from dancing and such externals, no, in the sense of witnessing for the truth and suffering for it, together with the understanding that suffering in this world belongs to being a Christian, and that a shrewd and secular conformity with this world is unchristian] - yes, indeed, pietism is the one and only consequence of Christianity (pap.x 3 A 437 [JP3318]).

### **conflict in SK's self-understanding**

The second consideration for SK's work is the tension within himself over his own social and religious identity. A struggle that tried to reconcile the conservative, romantic values of Golden Age Denmark with the radical and pietistic ideals of his religious upbringing. For much of the creativity and originality in his work is rooted in the ambivalent relationship that he found he had to the Danish Establishment.

Acutely aware of this tension, SK used a number of devices to deal with it. The most significant is his description of himself as a 'poet'. 'I am, who again and again have repeated and do now repeat, that I am only a poet'. The poet in SK's thought is someone who yearns for that which he does not possess, failing to embody it in

'actuality' (pap.x 2 A 184 [JP6528]; see also pap.x 1 A 502 [JP817], pap.x 2 A 283 [JP6844]). He presents an 'ideal' to which he is related only in terms of his desire, rather than in his daily existence. 'The question is: does or does not my personal life express what is communicated. As long as my life expresses what is communicated, I am a teacher; when this is not the case, I am obliged to add: what I say is certainly true, but my saying it is the poetic aspect; consequently it is a poet-communication' (pap.x 2 A 184 [JP6528]). The value in this communication was that the 'ideal' presented by the poet provided a potent force with which to alert people to the need of change in their own life and in the life of society. As SK observed, 'It is meaningful both for keeping me awake and keeping me striving, and, if possible, for awakening others' (pap.x 2 A 157 [JP6521]).

Thus this provided SK with a rationale with which he could subscribe to a radical pietistic understanding of Christianity, while remaining firmly within the conservative main stream of the Golden Age. He was related to his pietistic ideals and origins in terms of his aspirations, while the reality of his situation reflected the romantic and conservative values of his time. This concept also acted as a catalyst for many of SK's ideas concerning the centrality of grace in the Christian life - God accepting us even though we are not what we should be.

However, this rationale did not completely resolve the inner struggle that SK experienced. For this poetic form of existence was only the first stage of a progressive religious movement towards a higher state of existence in which the 'ideal' came to be embodied in the life of the individual. Thus in one of his journal entries, entitled the 'The Poetic - and Myself', SK writes, 'the event whereby I became a poet was an ethical break or a teleological suspension of the ethical. And both of these things make me to want to be something more than "the poet"...' (pap.x 3 A 789 [JP6718]).

Eventually, therefore, as the structure of Danish society changed, SK found it impossible to reconcile the values of the Golden Age with the radical nature of the Christian response that he believed was needed. Yet he still felt a considerable amount of ambivalence towards Golden Age religion and culture. As he acknowledges:

In the context of piety - the misfortune is that what [Mynster] substitutes for decisive, essential Christianity is - in the context of the purely human - so spellbinding - O, so spellbinding, so admirable - O, so admirable. And again it is - in the context of piety - my personal misfortune that I have so much of the aesthetic, the poetic in me that I am far too captivated and impressed with this spellbinding and admirable aspect of him... (pap.xi II A 283 [JP6844]).



This conflict within SK, therefore, provided the matrix in which the basic ideas for the *Attack* were formed. His pietistic perspective of Christian witness in the midst of society gave the background against which his own inner struggle took place as he attempted to reconcile his own religious experience with his allegiance to the Golden Age. It is in view of these pietistic influences, and the conflicts within SK himself, that the *Attack* must be read.

## 2.3 SK and Christianity

Fundamental to any interpretation of the *Attack*, therefore, is SK's understanding of Christianity and his relationship to it. Without such an understanding it is very easy to misrepresent SK's position and purpose. For instance, writers such as Jaspers, have argued that SK's attack on the church actually was [or would have become] an attack upon Christianity itself (see PA, 1962, pp.11-12). Lowrie also sights Brandes, Brochner, Hoffding, and Schrempf among early Kierkegaardians who favoured a similar type of interpretation (Lowrie, 1944, pp.3-6). Yet this tends to be based on the subjective judgement of thinkers who find SK's 'existentialism' appealing, but his Christianity otherwise, and who believe the two are fundamentally incompatible.

It is supported by the ambiguous nature of SK's relationship to the life of the church and Christianity itself. For, despite the fact that his commitment to Christianity is now widely recognised, his insistence in his writings that he was not a Christian and that the Christianity of the New Testament cannot exist in a contemporary situation, brought a considerable degree of ambivalence to his position. One reads, for instance, in his journals of 1854 statements such as, 'How far Christianity is from being a living reality may best be seen in me. For even with my clear knowledge of it I am still not a Christian' (pap.xi 2 A 244 [JP6934]).

Yet if read in the context in which this is written, this is not suggesting that SK considers himself to be irreligious or antagonistic to the Christian religion, but rather that he has not come to truly embody Christian ideals in the way in which he lives. In the conclusion of this journal entry he reiterates his commitment to Christianity in stressing, 'I am a man who, so to speak must discover Christianity by himself, dig down to make it emerge from the perverted state it has sunk to' (pap.xi 2 A 244 JP6934)).



Therefore, unlike other nineteenth century critics of religion such as Strauss, Feuerbach, Marx and Schopenhauer, SK's attack is issued not from outside, but from within the community of faith. It comes from one who though at odds with the institutional structures of the Danish Church, nevertheless considered himself committed to the immensely difficult task of 'becoming a Christian'. His writing was from beginning to end an enterprise in the service of Christianity, 'one which culminated at the foot of the altar in the attitude of worship' (pap.xi 2 A 439 [JP6969]).

### **theological basis of the 'Attack'**

Two important points, therefore, need to be made in relation to this. The first is that the *Attack*, unlike other nineteenth century critiques of religion, is rooted in a theological, rather than a political or philosophical framework. Its starting point is the New Testament and the gospel's suffering servant Christology. The critique is a theological analysis of the church's history, contemporary nature and relation to the socio-political order. It attempts to call into question, in the light of the church's own historical self-understanding, the social and political values which the ecclesiastical institutions embrace and in turn legitimise.

This grounding in the Christian tradition is epitomised in the midst of the attack in SK's very deliberate publication of an edifying discourse, entitled *The Unchangeableness of God*. In this discourse, SK affirms his continued commitment to Christianity and returns to a constant theme in his work that only a religious point of departure will provide an adequate basis for a new ethical and social composure in society<sup>5</sup>. Thus beneath the cynicism of the *Attack* we find a deeply rooted religious conviction which affirms that only in the nature of God is to be found grounds for human hope and the moral renewal of society. As Lowrie notes:

This edifying discourse published in the midst of SK's fierce attack upon the Established Church, and immediately after the most outrageous articles which are to be found in the *Instant*....calls attention to the fact that in the midst of this violent controversy SK did what he could to make his contemporaries understand that in attacking the Church he was speaking from within it, as a Christian (AUC, 1968, p.234).

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<sup>5</sup> This discourse is built around two basic propositions. The first is that God is engaged in the life of humanity. The second is that in view of the nature of God this necessitates that His presence must precipitate change in that life. In view of this, SK argues the Christian concept of God sees Him as 'unchanging' not because it isolates Him from temporal realities and concerns, but because it understands that in God's embracing of human existence and need, it is not God that is changed, but humanity

## **SK's understanding of Christendom**

The second element is the distinction SK makes between religion as an absolute and prior commitment of the individual to God, and religion as a socially supportive public institution. SK's work assumes that it is possible to understand Christianity in such a way that it presupposes an unmediated relationship between the individual and God. He is not a mystic - although clearly influenced by this stream of Christian thought - or an advocate of a 'churchless Christianity'. He is rather a proponent of the idea that a person's relationship to the church is the result, and not the basis, of Christianity. The life of the church is seen to emerge out of the individual's relationship to Christ, rather than exist as a mediating principle between the individual and God.

However, in the context of nineteenth century Denmark, in attacking the Danish Church and its institutional structures, SK was seen to be attacking Christianity itself. Christianity was understood to be synonymous with the institutional structures of the Church. For instance, Grundtvig and his followers defined Christianity primarily in terms of the individual's relationship to the life of the church and its sacraments (see 1.3).

Thus SK was condemned by Grundtvig as 'an enemy of Christ' and seen by the academic and cultural elite as an ally of the Marxists and anarchists (Kirmmse, 1977, p.575). Yet SK believed that it was possible to attack the religious institutions of Denmark, without negating Christianity itself. Christianity in SK is essentially concerned with, and defined by, the individual's relationship to the self-revelation of God in Christ. It is not a question of whether one subscribes to a particular social or religious institution, but whether one's existence is engaged by, and related to, Christ. Such a relationship necessitates personal appropriation, for it is only as an individual that one's existence may encounter and embrace this revealed pattern. The very nature of God's self-revelation demanding that one stands in a direct, unmediated, relationship to it.

Yet SK does not completely ignore the concept of the church, although clearly his reflections in this area are deficient. The individual's encounter with the self-revelation of God acts as the catalyst for the life of the church, the experience itself drawing individuals together. However, the danger in this is that in the forming of an association, it creates the possibility that the Christian may come to be defined purely in terms of his or her relationship to the association, rather than by his or her encounter with the self-revelation of God in Christ (pap.x 2 A 478 [JP4175]).

SK, therefore, draws a distinction between what he calls 'a qualitative' and 'a quantitative' form of religious expression (pap.vii. 1 A 191 [JP 2813]; pap.v 1 A 100 [JP5712]). A 'qualitative' form assumes that the essence of religion involves a transformation within the life of the individual, and it is out of this transformation that religion emerges. *Religion is seen to be the relating of the individual to the self-revelation of God which by its very nature transcends all human institutions and relationships.* On the other hand, a 'quantitative' expression assumes that the source of religion is found in social realities which do not reflect any type of reality which transcends the life of society. Religion acts purely as a function of the social matrix, and so is defined in terms of the existence of social and religious institutions.

This distinction acts as the basis of the tension between Christianity and Christendom which dominates the *Attack*. For SK Christianity is always the human shaped by the divine. It is that which cannot be explained without recourse to a point which transcends human experience and self-interests. Thus it calls into question the accepted social and cultural values of society, and demonstrates a completely different value system from that found in the dominant socio-political structure and relations of society. It exists in tension with every aspect of society shaped by humanity's autonomy from God. This is vividly seen in the person and work of Christ, and to a lesser extent in the early church.

On the other hand, the religion of Christendom demonstrates a religion which may be explained purely in terms of social, economic, and political realities. It is simply a deification of humanity and human self-interests. Christendom protects the status quo and acts as the guardian of the interests of the rich and the powerful. It is simply a religious legitimisation of the dominant economic, political, and social forces and values in society. And so, what it represents can be accounted for completely in terms of the social and economic forces at work within society. It fails to reflect the self-revelation of God in Christ which stands in opposition to the structures of power and oppression which emerge from human self-interest.

In view of this, the criticisms in the *Attack* are not unlike those found in other nineteenth century critics of religion, in that SK adopts a reductionist approach to religious expression. Yet unlike writers such as Marx and Feuerbach, SK does not believe that all forms of religious expression can be accounted for purely in terms of social, economic, or psychological variables.

Although he recognises that religion can never be isolated from such things, he also believes that religious expression may exist in such a way that it transcends the temporal and relative nature of human existence. Thus his work endeavours to contrast and explore the difference between a religion controlled completely by social and economic considerations, and one governed by a reality which stands over, and even against, such influences. He provides a contrast between a Christianity which finds its source in the self-revelation of God in Christ and one which is rooted purely in the political, social and economic realities of society, and it is this contrast that provides the basis for the *Attack*.

Therefore, SK perceived himself as standing firmly within the Christian tradition and acting as a proponent of the radical Christianity of the New Testament against the secularised Christianity of Christendom. It was in this context that he criticised the form of clerical witness which is shaped by economic, social, and cultural considerations to such an extent that it fails to call into question the accepted values and practices of the life of society. Rather than reflecting the self-revelation of God in Christ and the implications of this, the clergy were simply a self-interested body that expressed the dominant socio-political values of the time, and so continued to sustain the self-alienation of the individual and the oppressive structures of society.

## 2.4 the question of continuity

Yet this understanding of Christianity found in the *Attack* raises another question for the interpretation of SK which relates to the progressive nature of his thought. A number of writers have suggested that the *Attack* represents an aberration in SK's work (see 2.1). Originally some commentators thought it reflected an emotional imbalance or breakdown in SK himself, the product of a deranged mind, while more recently it has been thought to be the expression of a misdirected and flawed theology that SK became susceptible to towards the end of his life. Both positions advocate that the understanding of Christianity found in the *Attack* is an unfortunate distortion of SK's earlier held beliefs, and embodies an isolated and degenerate expression of his thought as a whole.



For instance, Slok pointing to the negative and highly derogatory way the *Attack* speaks of sexuality, marriage, and family life, argues a dramatic change took place in SK's thought in the late 1840's and early 1850's (Slok, 1978). In SK's earlier theology, he insists, no inherent antipathy existed between Christianity and human existence. 'The world of work and play, of family and friends' was 'the arena for the works of love' (Slok, 1978, p.19). 'Deriving its beginning from above', Christianity was seen 'to explain and transfigure and thereby exalt the earthly to heaven'. Faith was portrayed as concerning itself with the everyday encounters of human existence in the light of eternity (Slok, 1978, p.23).

However, in his later works SK completely abandoned the Christian humanism that characterised his pseudonymous authorship and adopted a dogmatic and 'one-sided' version of Christianity that set the human in opposition to the divine. For, according to Slok, Christianity in the *Attack* no longer involves the reconciliation of the divine and the human, but the negation of all that is human (Slok, 1978, p.79). Christianity changes from that which transposes all that is human in the light of a higher reality, to that which stands in opposition to that same humanity. Thus conversion comes to be seen strictly in terms of a distinctive form of suffering and 'dying to the world', whereas in the pseudonymous works and edifying discourses it was seen to involve no discernible outward change. 'One cannot distinguish the "knight of faith" from the rest of humanity' (Slok, 1978, p.48).

Slok, therefore, insists that the ability of SK's earlier thought to embrace the ambiguities of human existence and the nature of Christianity in a creative tension is completely lost in his later writings. The whole notion of the paradoxical nature of religious experience is shattered and replaced by a narrow-minded legalistic and distorted picture of Christianity based on an erroneous reading of the New Testament. SK's sensitivity to the psychological and religious realities that his earlier works portrayed so vividly, is suppressed (Slok, 1978, p.88). Thus Slok's contention is that in the final phase of his authorship, SK lost the ability to demonstrate how Christianity could be lived out in a practical way in the midst of life's ambiguities.

However, Slok's critique does not account for SK's own claims that there is complete continuity between his earlier and later works (PV, 1962). It appears that the charge of incongruity rests on certain assumptions about the subjectivism of SK's earlier writings which are completely contrary to SK's own analysis. There can be little doubt that in the writings towards the end of his life SK primarily appealed to the New Testament as

his basic point of reference, rather than human experience in and of itself, as he had in earlier work. He also does appear to be far more hostile to many aspects of human life, contrasting the human very much with the divine. However, Slok assumes that the *Attack* is primarily concerned with prescription, rather than perception. SK's last works are seen to address the question of human behaviour, rather than the issues of human consciousness.

### **SK's point of view of his work as an author**

Yet SK completely rejects this assumption. He insists that his work is solely concerned with the 'illusion of Christendom' and not with the demand for a normative pattern of behaviour. He portrays the *Attack* as a catalyst for confession, rather than a pattern for reform (AUC, 1968, p.37). In *the Point of View of my Work as an Author*, SK stresses that the shift that takes place in his writing is a question of the difference between 'direct' and 'indirect communication', and not one of substance (PV, 1962, pp.148-154). In communicating indirectly one allows the individual to discover the truth for himself, whereas in direct communication one spells out what that truth is.

Developing this idea, Malantschuk argues SK's basic intention in the pseudonymous literature was, through a strategy of 'indirect communication', to awaken the individual to the reality of the fragmented nature of human existence by portraying and exploring various aspects of the human condition<sup>6</sup>. Ultimately he wanted to confront people with the true depth of human despair and convey the need of the individual to relate himself or herself to the self-revelation of God in Christ (Malantschuk, 1977, pp.368-369). Thus in the *Attack*, and in the writings that immediately proceeded it, SK adopts a far more direct method of making the individual aware of the true state of the religious life of Denmark and by implication one's need in relation to God.

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<sup>6</sup> SK writes, 'Supposing then that a religious writer has become profoundly attentive to this illusion, Christendom, and has resolved to attack it with all the might at his disposal [with God's aid, be it noted] - what then is he to do? First and foremost, he will rush headlong against it and accomplish nothing. a direct attack only strengthens a person in his illusion, and at the same time embitters him. There is nothing that requires such a gentle handling as an illusion, if one wishes to dispel it. If anything prompts the prospective captive to set his will in opposition, all is lost. And this is what a direct attack achieves, and it implies moreover the presumption of requiring a man to make another person, or in his presence, an admission which he can make most profitably to himself privately. That is what is achieved by the indirect method, which, loving and serving the truth, arranges everything dialectically for the prospective captive, and then shyly withdraws [for love is always shy], so as not to witness the admission which he makes to himself alone before God - that he has lived hitherto in an illusion' (PV, 1962, pp.25-26).



Malantschuk maintains that if one accepts SK's own interpretation of his work, the *Attack* is part of a programme of 'anthropological contemplation' which lies behind the rest of his writing (Malantschuk, 1977, pp.338-345). A programme that attempts to make the individual aware of the true extent of human alienation, and the ramifications of this in relation to God, others, and one's self. In Malantschuk's thought, therefore, the difference between the earlier and later writings is the means which SK employs to communicate Denmark's state of alienation and need of conversion, and not his fundamental theology or outlook.

In view of this, the purpose of the *Attack* may be seen to be to encourage the people of Denmark to examine the whole concept of Christendom and their own religious experience in the light of the New Testament, and so bring them to a point of admitting their guilt and need before God. It is not a demand for a return to a biblical pattern, but an attempt to provide a mirror in which Christendom could be made aware of itself. As he writes, 'Such books are mirrors: when an ape peers into them, no apostle can be looking out'.

SK insists he is not acting as 'one with authority' who has the right to direct others' lives, but as one 'without authority' who can only uncover what is hidden<sup>7</sup>. He is a 'secret agent' revealing and describing the hidden depths of the religious life of Denmark (see pap. ix A 142, 155, 190 [JP6192, 6198, 6221], pap.x 1 A 74 [JP 6325], pap.x 4 A 201 [6752], pap.xi 1 A 258 [JP6887], pap.xi 2 A 40, 121, 250 [JP6922, 6930, 6936]).

Moreover, this view is consistent with SK's own claims that his critique is not an expression of a legalistic and inflexible understanding of Christianity, but an attempt to bring people to a new awareness of the grace of God. SK's hope was that out of the sense of inadequacy that there would grow a greater appreciation of God's unconditional love. As he notes, 'In my presentation severity is a dialectical "movement"....To put an end to coquetry I have had to apply severity - and have applied it precisely in order to give impetus to the resort to leniency' (AUC, 1968, p.94). Thus the reading of the *Attack* found in the work of Slok fails to adequately take account of this distinctive methodology. Although it recognises the severe nature of

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<sup>7</sup> 'Without authority to call attention to religion, to Christianity, is the category for my whole activity as an author, integrally regarded. That I was "without authority" I have from the first moment asserted clearly and repeated as a stereotyped phrase. I regard myself preferably as a reader of the books, not as the author' (PV, 1962, p.151).



SK's portrayal of New Testament Christianity, sufficient consideration is not given to the intentions behind this portrayal or SK's understanding of the unconditional nature of God's grace.

### **the alienated self**

A further weakness in Slok's interpretation is the suggestion that the opposition of the divine and human in the *Attack* represents a radical discontinuity. Without a very selective reading of the pseudonymous literature this suggestion is very difficult to sustain. For example, SK's negative attitude towards human sexuality in his later writings is simply a reiteration of a theme developed in much earlier works. In the *Concept of Dread*, for instance, in 1844 SK presented a complex and almost Gnostic view of the relationship between procreation and sin. In the same way, SK's Christology in *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, and to a lesser extent *Fear and Trembling*, assumes the self-revelation of God in Christ stands in complete opposition to human reason. It is the 'absurd', and as such cannot have arisen within the human mind, for it stands over and against all of people's natural perceptions of the divine. Therefore, one of the basic building blocks of all of SK's thought was the proposition that the nature of Christianity is such that it cannot have arisen within the human spirit, for what it embodies is alien to humanity.

In reaction to the romantic philosophies of his day and the reductionism of Feuerbach's critique of religion, SK was adamant the human cannot be identified with the divine. Yet there is an apparent contradiction in SK's work in relation to this, as Slok notes. SK embraces a type of Christian humanism which suggests that one can only be truly human as one is truly religious. That is, he implies that Christianity is concerned with the transformation, rather than the negation of human experience and life. Yet at the same time he maintains that the human and the divine must be seen to stand in opposition to each other.

This apparent contradiction, however, is not as great as it would first seem, for it is resolved in an understanding of SK's anthropology. He accepted the romantic notion that humanity is a composition of the human [temporal] and the divine [eternal] (CD, 1944, pp.90-91). This also provided him with a link to the mystics. Yet contrary to the dominant ideas of his time he did not believe that divine light permeates human consciousness, rather, he maintained, that humanity is completely alienated from the eternal aspects of their existence. So, for instance, in the pseudonymous works he

turns the accepted axiom of the Golden Age on its head that human and divine consciousness touch. He assumes the subjective and introspective approach of much romantic idealism does not reveal the divine in human self-consciousness, but rather the fragmented nature of human being. Thus works such as *Either/Or, Stages on Life's Way*, and the psychological essays *Sickness Unto Death* and *Concept of Dread* embrace elements of the idealism of the romantic movement, while suggesting an examination of human consciousness reveals the depths of human despair, not divine light<sup>8</sup>.

In view of this, SK believed that a true humanity could only be discovered through the healing of the alienated self. That is, through the relating of one's self to the eternal light within, the 'absolute being' of existence. In *Either/Or* SK makes it clear that to be human is ultimately concerned 'not with finite things', but with the relating of one's self to the 'absolute'.

Yet he rejects any notion that this healing process is possible through human endeavour alone, and reflecting his pietistic roots he insists it requires God to act. A person's encounter with Christ becomes the means by which the healing of the alienated self takes place<sup>9</sup>. The various discussions of how 'a historical point of reference' can act as the basis for 'an eternal consciousness' in *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* develops SK's ideas in regard to this. The self-revelation of God in Christ awakens the individual to the crisis in his or her own existence in restoring a sense of the eternal.

However, this does not bring reconciliation to human being, but only an awareness of how alienated from the eternal aspect of their existence the individual is. The eternal is re-introduced into the individual's existence in the sense that they have a new awareness of how far they truly are from the divine. Thus Christ confronts the individual with the need of repentance and in so repenting the individual is relating him

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<sup>8</sup> SK notes, 'the aesthetic work is a deception, and herein is to be found the deeper significance of the use of pseudonyms.... What does it mean, "to deceive"? It means that one does not begin directly with the matter one wants to communicate, but begins by accepting the other man's illusion as good money....The deception consists in the fact that one talks thus merely to get to the religious theme'. (PV, 1962, p25).

<sup>9</sup> SK writes, 'The Christian view takes the position that non-being is present everywhere at the nothing from which things were created, as semblance and vanity, as sin, as sensuousness removed from spirit, as the temporal alienated from the eternal; consequently, the task is to do away with it in order to bring forth being. Only with this orientation in mind can the concept of the Atonement be correctly understood historically, that is, in the sense in which Christianity brought it into the world. If the term is understood in the opposite sense [the movement proceeding from the assumption that non-being is not], the Atonement is volatilized and turned inside out'. (CD 1980, p83).

or herself to the eternal aspect of human being (CD, 1944, p.117). A thing which would not be possible without the awareness of the eternal that Christ brings.

Moreover, with the individual being put in touch with the eternal aspect of their being, it demands that they take hold of it further. Ethical realities, for SK, being rooted in humanity's sense of the eternal. A pilgrimage, therefore, begins towards the divine light within the human soul that is marked by a process of visible sanctification. SK describing Christianity as a process of 'becoming' not of 'being' (pap.x I A 522 [JP593], pap.xi 2 A 8 [JP2450], pap.x 2 A 416 [JP3852]). Thus he believes that Christianity does not assume that the divine is completely reconciled to the human, but that one is put on a journey towards the eternal light in human existence: a knowledge of which has been brought by Christ. SK, therefore, embraces a religious philosophy which may be understood as a form of 'Christian humanism', or more accurately a Christian mysticism. Alienation from God is a form of self-alienation. In relating oneself to the divine, one is entering into a journey of self-discovery, the occasion for which is the self-revelation of God in Christ.

Thus the problem SK perceived in Denmark and the romantic philosophies that shaped its academic and artistic life was that there was a denial of the alienated condition of humanity. He saw it as his task to destroy the 'illusion of Christendom' which identified the divine with the human by contrasting the eternal with the temporal, the pattern of the self-revelation of God with the self-interest of socio-political structures and relations. His hope was that in view of this people would recognise a need and come to a point of repentance, for only through this could the alienated self be healed and discover the grace of God that accepts us in our weakness.

In advocating, therefore, the opposition of the divine and the human, SK was not abandoning his humanistic ideals, but rather affirming them. Yet Slok's interpretation fails to appreciate this. He is wrong to insist that the Christian humanism that is implicit in SK's earlier thought is no longer present in the *Attack*, for like the pseudonymous writings it addresses itself to the critical question of the conflict between the temporal and eternal elements found within human existence. It assumes that a failure to recognise the discontinuity in the relationship between the human and the divine leads to a situation in which the expressions of self-alienation in the life of the individual and society become normative. Thus eternal interests are reduced simply to the temporal and finite concerns of existence, and human worth is called into question.

The *Attack*, therefore, like SK's other work begins with the premise that in making the human and the divine synonymous in philosophical systems or cultural expressions or even the life of the Church a state of 'self-deception' is involved which obscures the true nature of the human situation. Thus the first step in addressing the alienated state of humanity is to remove this deception. This he endeavours to do in the pseudonymous works indirectly through a careful analysis of human consciousness and existence in the hope that the individual would recognise its fragmented nature, and then in a more direct way by contrasting the life of Christendom with the pattern of Christ. The fundamental change, therefore, in SK's work may be seen to be as Malantschuk maintains the means of communication, and not the underlying frame of reference which shaped his ideas.

### **a progressive critique**

However, in coming to this conclusion and rejecting Slok analysis, it would be wrong to assume that SK's later thought simply involves a reiteration or intensification of earlier held positions. To do so is to ignore new points of view that do emerge in the later period, and to perpetuate the image of a static theology concerned only with eternity and the single individual. For although it is possible to identify the idea of human alienation running throughout SK's work his understand of this does change. We have already noted, SK's theology is so closely linked with his experience of life that it consciously developed in response to the situations and events he encountered. For instance, clearly the political turmoil leading up to 1848, his relationship to Mynster, and the Corsair Affair all deeply affected SK's thought.

Kresten Nordentoft in his book, *SK's Psychology*, traces what he sees as a progressive pattern in SK's social and theological thinking after 1848. He suggests that it is possible to speak of two distinctive Kierkegaards - 'Kierkegaard a' and 'Kierkegaard b' (Nordentoft, 1978).

'Kierkegaard a' is the conservative social critic and theologian of the years leading up to 1848 whose thought is preoccupied with the single individual and the sense of transcendence. He is the author of pseudonymous works who explores situations and orientations in human life from the perspective of faith, yet not directly, but as a 'Socratic midwife', maieutically, allowing the reader to come to his or her own conclusion (Nordentoft, 1978, p.47ff.).

'Kierkegaard b' is the seldom recognised, and little understood figure who appears in the more radical literature of the late 1840's and early 1850's. This SK believed that the message of Christianity could not be separated from a critique of the social-political order. He proclaimed Christianity's affinity with the poor, the sick, and all who suffer and called into question the social structures and values embodied in, and legitimated by, the established church (Nordentoft, 1978, p.62ff.). Yet both SK 'a' and 'b' shared a common concern with human alienation and the 'spiritlessness' which resulted from this. Moreover, they both shared an 'incarnational optimism' which pointed to the healing and redemptive power of love found only in Christ.

This analysis provides a useful framework for understanding SK writings. Although drawing a rather arbitrary line that suggests a radical break in SK's thought rather than a gradual progression, it draws attention to the fact that a very definite change took place in SK's thinking. A change that saw the focus of his work move from psychological to sociological concerns: from the category of 'the single individual' to a preoccupation with social realities [the poor, the 'crowd', the clergy]. Thus after 1846 SK comes to combine with his psychological and introspective analysis of human alienation, an increasing awareness of the role that social relations play in this. And the *Attack Upon Christendom* is very much the logical outworking of this new found awareness, for its concerns are the social structures and relations, rather than the various psychological elements, of such alienation.

Yet the point of departure for this new direction in SK's thought is seen almost ten years earlier in the socio-political essay, *The Two Ages*, published in 1846. In this SK began to explore what he saw as the implications of human alienation in the life of society, describing a 'levelling process' which undermines the moral and religious absolutes of society. In turn this raised the question for SK 'what must be the Christian response in the midst of such a society?'. In such works, therefore, as *Two Notes Concerning My Work as an Author*, *Works of Love*, *For Self-Examination*, and *Training in Christianity*, SK explored this issue further, until the full implications became apparent in the *Attack Upon Christendom*. As he writes in 1849:

The beginning of my authorship is indirectly explained in something correlative, the essay "The Dialectical Relations: The Universal, the Single Individual, the Special Individual." The more recent direction is indirectly explained in the essay "Has a Man the Right To Let Himself Be Put To Death for the Truth?" (pap.x 1 A 140 [JP6358]).

It is, therefore, possible to identify three fundamental differences between the ideas that shaped SK's earlier writings and those which lay behind the *Attack*.

### 1] social concern

Firstly, there is a much greater emphasis in the later works on the social dimension of human existence. In earlier writings, SK's work had focused primarily on the category of the single individual who acted before God. For instance, *In Purity of Heart*, SK draws the celebrated image of the individual upon the stage who acts out his or her life in front of a divine spectator. SK acts as the 'prompter' who 'whispers to the actor what he is to say', while the actor's response before God is the only concern (PH, 1955, p.159). Yet the picture for SK became far more complicated as he became aware of the fact that the relationship that he had to the single individual was not as straight forward as that of the 'prompter' to an 'actor', for the actor was implicated in a series of social relationships. Thus SK slowly came to recognise that one could not separate the question of self-alienation from that of the social structures which shape human consciousness and sustain such alienation. As he writes in the *Attack* itself:

Think of a hospital. The patients are dying like flies. The methods are altered in one way and another. It's no use. What does it come from ? It comes from the building, the whole building is full of poison. That the patients are registered as dead, one of this disease, and that of another, is not true; for they are all dead from the poison that is in the building.

So it is in the religious sphere. That the situation is lamentable, that religiously men are in a pitiable state, nothing is more certain. So one man thinks it would help if we got a new hymnal, another a new altar-book, another a musical service, etc.,etc.

In vain - for it comes from...the building. This whole lumberroom of a State Church - the air confined in this lumberroom has developed poison. And for this reason the religious life is sick or has died out (AUC, 1968, pp.139-140).

As this concept began to develop in his work, SK initially believed that it was possible to alter the individual to the dangers of this 'crowd mentality' without addressing the social structures themselves. This resulted in SK's damning critique of the 'crowd' and the 'masses' in works such as *Purity of Heart* and *Two Notes Concerning My Work as an Author*. However, as time went on he became more aware that to remove the 'illusion' and perceptions created by social realities one had to address and change the social structures which enveloped the individual. Again as he writes:



There would be no further task, were it not that this illusion, the fact that men imagine they are Christians, is connected with an enormously big illusion which has a purely external side, the illusion that Christianity and State have been amalgamated....Now this illusion is of a different sort from the first one mentioned, which had to do with men's conceptions, the ensnarement of the individuals in the conceit that they were Christians. In the case of this latter illusion one must go to work in another fashion, for the State has the power to do away with it (AUC, 1968, p.97).

The *Attack*, therefore, reflects a very different point of departure from SK's earlier works in that it assumes that the self-deception which is symptomatic of the alienated self, is rooted not only in the individual's consciousness, but also in the social structures in which he or she is implicated.

## 2) Christian witness

A second distinction is found in SK's concern with Christian witness. Ever since as a student, when SK records he was able to act as the life and soul of a party while yet being on the verge of suicide, he had been fascinated by the correlation of appearance and reality. This had given him a basic interest in the statements which are made to others by the way in which one acts and the potential inconsistencies in relation to what one says and knows to be true. [SK's relationship to Mynster had considerable bearing on these reflections]. However, as his thought developed and the idea of social realities became more important in his understanding of human alienation, this interest took on new meaning.

Thus it raised the question for SK how is one to act in a secular society, so that one's life speaks of a higher reality. That is, it led him to look at what constitutes a Christian witness in a contemporary society, for he was convinced that the existing witness of the clergy was an 'untruth. Being completely secularised and in the service of the State [royal functionaries, persons of social position, making a career]' (AUC, 1968, p.97). A discernible shift takes place in the emphasis of SK's work as he turns away from the earlier publications concentrating on questions of Christology and human anthropology - questions of humanity's relationship to God - and focuses on questions of Christian witness - questions of the relationship of the Church to society. As he himself notes:

To be a Christian involves a double danger. First, all the intense internal suffering involved in becoming a Christian, this losing human reason and being crucified on the paradox. - This is the issue *Concluding Postscript* presents as ideally as possible. Then the danger of the Christian's having to live in the world of secularity and here express that he is a Christian. Here belongs all the later productivity, which will culminate in what I have ready at present and which



could be published under the title: *Collected Works of Consummation* (pap.ix A 414 [JP413]).

Thus as SK acknowledges before 1846, he was primarily concerned with the individual's encounter with God, yet after this a new concern began to emerge in his work in relation to the individual's encounter with society. SK's later thought, therefore, is born out of his seeking to answer the question what must be the response of Christianity to social structures shaped by, and in turn the author of, human alienation. For SK's overriding conviction is that the professional self-interests of the clergy leads them to act in such a way that their 'witness' is completely incompatible with communicating the Christian gospel. 'The offence of Christianity', therefore, is no longer perceived primarily in terms of the affront that it causes to human reason, but rather in terms of its negation of human self-interest. It is a shift which moves the focus of SK's thought away from issues of religious awareness to questions of human behaviour. It is in relation to this progression that a third principal area of difference may be identified.

### 3) external reforms

Throughout his literary career SK maintained that what he was calling for was an 'admission', a confession of the true depth of a person's despair before God. In seeking this admission in his earlier writings he confronted the individual with the person of Christ, emphasising the paradoxical and absurd nature of the incarnation. In later works as he addressed himself to the ecclesiastical authorities seeking that same admission he drew on the work of Christ, pointing to the pattern of self-sacrifice he provided. Yet in both periods he was seeking a change in awareness and calling for a confession. He was not primarily looking to change a person's behaviour or call him or her back to a New Testament expression of Christianity. SK, therefore, was adamant that he was not proposing a programme of external reform either for the individual or the Establishment. He was simply seeking honesty (AUC, 1968, p.37).

However, despite this being the position throughout his literary career, and even in the initial stages of the *Attack* [up until 31 March 1855], his thought underwent a revision. With the resistance that his call for an admission received, he recognised that the self-interests of the clergy were such that unless these were removed the type of clerical integrity he was seeking was impossible. Thus by 16 May 1855 he had come to the conclusion that change to the social structures which sustained these self-interests was necessary.

Moreover, he was now also convinced that to ignore the call for a visible response in the midst of society to one's encounter with Christ was to presume too much of the grace of God (AUC, 1968, p.54). He, therefore, acknowledged the need for a visible change in the life of the Church.

Thus we find in the *Attack* that SK adopts a position which advocates reform in a way that he had resisted throughout most of his literary career. Yet it is important to note that the reform that he proposed was not an end in itself or an attempt to return to an 'ideal' form of New Testament, for SK believed it was impossible to return to the Christianity of the New Testament and any attempt to do so created a greater 'illusion' than that of Christendom itself. Rather the reform that he advocated was a means to an end. It was an attempt to remove the barriers which hinder the Church and its clergy from making a true confession before God and the rest of society. 'If I were to liken this task to anything,' he writes, 'I would say that it resembles the therapeutic treatment of a psychic patient. One must work on psychic lines, says the physician; but it does not follow from this that there may be nothing to do physically' (AUC, 1968, p.97).

Therefore, we find the effort to make sense of the late SK reflects what primary sources, his journals and published writings from that period, indicate all too clearly, namely 'that his later thinking is a tangle of insight, experimentation, ambivalence, and metamorphosis' (Plekon, 1982, p.331). The *Attack* appears as the product of a gradual process of change in the focus of SK's thought as he responded to the changing nature of Danish society. The relationship of the *Attack* to the rest of his work suggests a progression in his writings and thought, rather than a radical discontinuity. It bears witness to his increasing recognition that the roots of humanity's religious and psychological alienation could not be limited to the realms of the individual's consciousness, but were bound up with the nature of social realities. This awareness slowly changes the emphasis of SK's work to look more at the nature of Christian witness in society. This in turn bringing about his radical critique of the Establishment.

## Conclusion

If the *Attack* is interpreted in the context of SK's life, work and Christian commitment it is seen to centre on the nature of Christian witness, and brings together the pietistic influences in SK's thought with the tensions that he felt in his own religious and social self-understanding. It represents the progression in SK's work as he was forced to leave behind the predominantly subjective emphasis of his earlier writings to examine further the social implications of human self-alienation in view of the changing social and economic realities of Denmark. Yet the *Attack* should not be understood as a radical discontinuity in SK's thought. It is rather a logical progression in his thinking as his understanding of human self-alienation progressed beyond subjective categories. The *Attack*, therefore, represents SK's growing preoccupation with the issue of Christian witness and the nature of the church's relationship to the self-interested and alienated structures of society.

However, this growing preoccupation is set against SK's own struggle in relation to his religious and social identity. It reflects the tension that he felt between the radical and militant ideals of his pietistic and peasant origins and his affinity with, and membership of, the dominant cultural and academic elite of the Golden Age. This tension was very much intensified by SK's understanding of Christianity and his belief that Christianity necessitates a visible response in the midst of society to the self-revelation of God in Christ. The critique, therefore, is built around the proposition that if a Christian witness is to be established in society it must address itself to the underlying values which govern a secular society, and it is in relation to this that SK discusses the question of clerical self-interests and occupational identity.

**Part two**

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# **Ministry and Witness**

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## Chapter Three

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# Kierkegaard's social and political thought

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In the previous chapter, I argued that the *Attack* should be interpreted in relation to SK's pietistic background and the struggle within his own social and religious self-understanding. I suggested that it represents a logical progression in his thought and work as he turned away from his concern with 'hidden inwardness' and the necessity of being a 'single individual', to a new emphasis on the nature of Christian witness in a secular society. Therefore, as was stressed in chapter one the socio-political context out of which the *Attack* arose is an essential element in any analysis of SK's later work. Yet this acted not only as the occasion for SK's writing, but very much shaped his thought in relation to Christian witness. Thus in order to understand SK's view of 'Witnessing to the Truth', it is necessary to understand his perceptions of the social and political realities around him. It is to this that I turn in this chapter.

### religious conviction and social change

With the dramatic changes of 1848 and the new Church constitution, SK grew convinced of the need for a radical Christian witness in society. A witness that would call into question, rather than legitimate, the increasingly secular nature of social relations and values. For as he writes, 'In a catastrophe like ours, the Christianity Bishop Mynster's proclamation represents is utterly untenable' (pap.xi III B 15 [JP6854]). Therefore, SK's work began to focus on questions that related to the nature of Christian witness, and in private conversations he attempted to convince Bishop Mynster [the Danish Primate] of the depth of the spiritual crisis that afflicted the Danish Church.

Eventually, in 1851 with the publication of *Training in Christianity*, he came to publicly call for an 'admission' from the ecclesiastical authorities to acknowledge publicly that they embodied the values of a secular society, rather than those of New Testament Christianity. Yet Mynster saw in this a veiled personal attack. He not only refused to respond to the call for an admission, but increasingly distanced himself from SK. As SK recalls, 'When I spoke with Mynster the first time after the publication of *Practice in Christianity*, he said among other things that it was plain to see that I was out after him, that two thirds of the book was against him and one third against Martensen'. Yet it was not until December 1854, after Mynster's death, that the tension between the Danish Primate and SK became publicly apparent<sup>1</sup>.

At the heart of this conflict between Mynster and SK was the conviction that the political and social change found in nineteenth century Europe was an expression of a fundamental crisis in the religious consciousness of the individual, this crisis translating itself into social structures and relations (Kirmmse, 1977; Nortendoft 1978). As SK wrote in 1849 - after the collapse of absolute monarchy in Denmark - at the Reformation 'everything had the appearance of religious movement but showed itself to be political movement; now everything appears to be politics but will explicate itself as religious movement' (pap.ix B 63:7 [JP6255]; see also pap.x 6 B 40, 5 A 115, 3 A 696 [JP6256, 4220, 3686]). This 'spiritual bankruptcy' expresses itself in rationalistic philosophies, the negation of authority, and socio-political structures that foster human self-alienation (TA, 1978).

Therefore, SK portrays the political, religious and social ferment of his time as a process of 'secularisation' [*Verdslighed*] - the loss of a transcendent ['eternal'] and absolute frame of reference in the life of society and the individual (see pap.x 2 A 27, 58, 37, 57 [JP386, 387, 510, 612], pap.x 3 A 153, 137, 242 [JP2518, 394, 3149], pap.xi 1 A 56 [JP6859]). As he observes in 1848, 'That a world-shift has taken place can be seen from the fact that it is necessary to redefine man's relationship to the ideal; the present generation has no norm' (pap.x 3 A 576 [JP1792]). The individual's self-alienation from the 'eternal' and 'divine' aspects of human being translating itself into society in terms

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<sup>1</sup> A Journal entry entitled, 'The Disagreement between Mynster and Me', states, 'Mynster believed [perhaps even believed it was acceptable to God] that everything must be done to hide the true state of things, for otherwise everything would fall apart; my idea is everything must be done to make manifest the true state of things' pap.xi 2 A 314 [JP6849]; see also pap.x 4 A 511 [JP6795], 6 B 232 [JP6842], pap.xi, 3 B 15 [JP6854] pap.xi 3 B 53 [JP 6943], pap.xi 1 A 1 [JP6853], 1 A 72 [JP6862], 2 A 40 [JP6922], pap.x 4 A 604 [JP6813] for an account of this discussion.



of a pragmatic and relativistic structure of values. Thus SK claims of his age, 'Eternity is done away with and the perfection of all is transferred to the temporal' (TC, 1967, p.218; see also pap.x 2 A 247 [JP2430]).

It was against this background that SK came to the conviction that 'social and political renewal could only come through religious renewal' (JP, 1978, p.664). It was out of this conviction that his critique of Christendom and the clergy emerged. Therefore, I purpose in the course of this chapter to explore SK's understanding of society and its evolution, and in view of this to examine two possible interpretations of the *Attack Upon Christendom*.

### 3.1 social perspective

SK believed that the human self is a relational being, socially constructed and dependent (SUD, 1980, pp.13-14, 79-81, 114). As is seen in works such as *Sickness Unto Death*, the self is located or 'grounded' within the confines of an array of relationships, ranging from those of biological species to the social bonds of the family, church and nation. In SK human being is rooted in time as well as in the timelessness of eternity. The individual is always located within history and the social matrix (SUD, 1980, p.13). As Judge William notes in *Either/Or* the self cannot be understood in isolation from the social realities that surround it, because the self is not only 'a personal self but also a social and civic self' (EO, 1959, p.297). Plekon, therefore, argues 'It is something of an oversight to note only SK's affirmations of subjectivity, his emphasis on passion and decision. These emphases are for him always paralleled by his view of the self's grounding [biological, historical and social] and thus his social psychology is a subtle, dialectical understanding of the relationship of self to society' (Plekon, 1982a, p.71).

Therefore, despite emphasising the 'subjective' nature of the relationship between the human self and the eternal, SK's thought assumes this is to be worked out in the social, political and psychological realms of existence. For instance, in *Works of Love* he maintains the individual's love of God, an invisible reality, must take visible expression in his or her relationship to others. Yet out of this dialectic understanding of the self and society, came a fascination with the psychological, social and even political implications of human self-alienation - the loss of the 'divine' and 'eternal' in human existence.

SK was deeply concerned with the question of what the negation of religious convictions means in terms of social structures and relations. He was convinced that humanity's alienation from God had social implications that needed to be examined and defined (pap.i A 328, [JP5181]). As early as 1838, in *From the Papers of One Still Living*, SK had commented on the disintegration in the social and political life of Denmark. This translated itself into a critique of what he called the 'spiritlessness' [*Aandloshed*] of his age - ethical and religious emptiness - which appeared in works such as *Fear and Trembling*, *Stages On Life's Way*, *The Concept of Dread*, *The Sickness Unto Death*, and *The Concluding Unscientific PostScript* (FT, 1983, pp.42-62; SOLW, 1967, pp.88-93, 97-185; CD, 1944, pp.83-86; SUD, 1980, pp.170-180; CUP, 1941, pp.486-7). What becomes clear from these writings is that SK was very much part of the group of Danish writers and social commentators at this time who believed that as Christianity loses its true meaning and significance social transformation and even 'catastrophe' is inevitable within the life of society (JP, 1978, p.664). Thus it is not surprising to find that from 1846 the notion of the secular society and its social ramifications increasingly preoccupied SK.

This resulted in writing of the socio-political essay, *A Literary Review of the Two Ages*, just after the completion of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* in 1846. This work is significant for a number of reasons. It was the first work to be published by SK under his own name and was intended to mark the completion of his authorship (PV, 1962, pp.45-53). Yet it is also significant in terms of its subject matter. Contrasting the eighteenth century's revolutionary spirit with the conservatism of the mid nineteenth century, 'an age of passion' with 'an age of reflection', SK presents an extensive critique of the social and psychological consequences of a society devoid of religious and ethical conviction (PA, 1962, p.33ff.).

Thus this critique provides the most comprehensive and detailed analysis of SK's social theory. Like other sociological studies of this time it is rooted in a general theory of the evolutionary development of society, classifying and contrasting two societies ['ages'] in a historical continuum (Denon, 1958, p.258). Yet unlike other nineteenth-century sociologists who used evolutionary schemes that embraced historical and cultural types of social organisation in a single unifying theory, SK resisted any utopian tendencies. For him human history did not represent progression, but rather regression. Each subsequent generation embodied a further deterioration, human alienation increasing in each age (AUC, 1968, pp.28-29).

SK, therefore, was very sceptical as to the claims of the supposedly progressive nature of the modern world and set about revealing what he saw as the negative moral, social and spiritual consequences of modernity. As Plekon argues, 'SK provides an assessment of modernity which ranks in clarity and originality with those of Weber, Durkheim and Simmel' (Plekon, 1980, p.347). Yet this is probably to claim too much, for the social theory in SK is submerged in a conglomeration of romantic ideals, biographical interpolations and arduous Hegelian terminology. Nevertheless, once distilled from these influences, it provides a fascinating interpretation of nineteenth century society.

### **erosion of ethico-religious values**

The fundamental problem that SK saw in Danish society, and throughout Europe, was the erosion of ethico-religious values. He writes 'an age without passion has no values, and everything is transformed into representational ideas' (PA, 1962, p.41). That is to say, because people order their lives in accordance with whatever is seen to be socially expedient, there is no longer in social relations a definite and consistent set of values, and so the values embodied in the life of society are highly fragmented and contradictory. For instance, SK notes Danish Nationalism suggests in the movement for democratisation that human equality is absolute, whereas that same movement breeds a racist contempt for other human beings of different nationality (PA, 1962, p.47). As he concludes, 'The present age...has abolished the principle of contradiction' (PA, 1962, p.77).

Yet it is important to note that this negation of values is not seen in terms of the propositional understanding of society, but in terms of its patterns of behaviour (CUP, 1941, pp.22-55, 59-113, 323-46). For SK in claiming that 'an age without passion has no values' is not suggesting that there are no professed ethical or religious beliefs and values in a society or even that the life of a society is not interpreted in terms of these beliefs, but rather that when one actually looks at what takes place one sees a pragmatic and relativistic philosophy at work.

SK, therefore, is able to describe his age as completely 'secularised' despite the fact that an institutionalised form of religion still plays a major role in the life of that society. For he is claiming that the behaviour of society and the religion that it embraces is such that it does not express any type of relation to the ethico-religious nature of human being. The Church is simply a religious embodiment of a secularised State.

Thus secularisation changes a society from one that holds to absolute and uniform values in its formation of social behaviour, to one that is governed by a fragmented and relative frame of reference. This disintegration of the 'sacred canopy' taking place not in institutional or propositional terms, but in the erosion of the ethico-religious grounding of social behaviour. However, SK also accepted that it is inevitable that the fragmented and pragmatic nature of values in society will force a change in propositional and institutional forms. As he writes, 'Basically the generation lives on and eats away the traditions of a vanished past. But these traditions become thinner and thinner, there is no new infusion from on high, that divine flowing is constantly diluted more and more by this merely human agreement between man and man - ergo, the world goes backwards' (pap.ix A 117 [JP4148]).

SK, therefore, saw in his society a shift away from a transcendent and unchanging relation rooted in the very nature of humanity and expressed in tradition to one submerged in the relativism of the socio-political context of the social matrix: a movement from conviction to consensus. For with no definite moral framework within which to act social perceptions and what is expedient, rather than any sense of ultimate right and wrong, were becoming increasingly important in the making of moral and other decisions.

### **authority in crisis**

SK sets this shift in the context of a historical crisis in the nature of authority. He maintains that as the process of human self-alienation continues through history it causes the erosion of the concept of transcendence, for humanity grows further and further from the divine through each subsequent generation. Thus it is inevitable that as this progressive movement away from the transcendent nature of human being occurs, the traditional understandings and sources of authority come to be undermined and even rejected.

This creates the age of reason in which everything is given over to reflection. With the turning away from the traditional sources of authority rooted in religious tradition and institutions, a new criterion needs to be found by which to act. Yet human reason fails to act as this criterion for it is by nature 'so dialectical that the result of one clever discovery may give the whole question a new turn, because at any moment reflection is

capable of explaining everything quite differently' (PA, 1962, p.44). Thus the age of reason fosters complacency rather than action, confusion rather than meaning, and disinterest rather than significance. As SK notes:

A passionate tumultuous age will overthrow everything, pull everything down; but a revolutionary age, that is at the same time reflective and passionless, transforms that expression of strength into a feat of dialectics: it leaves everything standing but cunningly empties it of significance. Instead of culminating in a rebellion it reduces the inward reality of all relationships to a reflective tension which leaves everything standing but makes the whole of life ambiguous: so that everything continues to exist factually whilst by a dialectical deceit, *privatissime*, it supplies a secret interpretation - that it does not exist (PA, 1962, p.45).

SK brings together this critique of human reason that was implicit in so much of his earlier work and develops from it his distinctive understanding of society. For with the failure of human reason, the individual, rather than becoming an authority unto himself or herself which would be a characteristic of an earlier age, is seen to come together with others seeking to find authority in numbers<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the life of society is no longer shaped by reason or even religious conviction, but by social consensus. 'People add themselves together [it is called joining together, but that is only a polite euphemism] for the most trivial purposes. Simply in order to put a passing whim into practice a few people add themselves together, and the thing is done - then they dare do it' (PA, 1962, p.58).

Thus with the notion that authority, power, and truth, are functions of divine edict being rejected, and the subsequent crisis in the nature of reason, these concepts are seen to be abandoned to the random forces of social consensus. The number of people who subscribe to a particular idea or attitude coming to be the new criterion by which these things are established. Moreover, with this crisis in religious authority, people's lives come to be ordered in such a way that nothing is attributed with an absolute and intrinsic significance. Everything is subject to the value that the 'market', so to speak, imputes to it. That is, in the formation of social behaviour nothing is seen to have value in and of itself, but everything is governed by its social significance, usefulness and desirability. As he writes of his age:

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<sup>2</sup> 'The individual no longer belongs to God, to himself, to his beloved, to his art or to his science, he is conscious of belonging in all things to an abstraction to which he is subjected by reflection, just as a serf belongs to an estate...There is no other reason for this than that eternal responsibility, and the religious singling out of the individual before God, is ignored' (PA, 1962, p.59)

This is what it aspires to: it would build up the established order, abolish God, and through fear of men cow the individual into a mouse's hole....When the established order has come to the point of deifying itself, then in the end use and wont become articles of faith, everything becomes about equally important, or custom, use, and wont become the important things. The individual no longer feels and recognises that he along with every individual has a God-relationship which for him must possess absolute significance. No, the God relationship is done away with; use and wont, custom and such like are deified (TC, 1941, p.93).

Thus he interprets the social turmoil of the nineteenth century as the logical outworking of a crisis in confidence in religious institutions and traditions, creating a functional and pragmatic social philosophy. As he concludes in *On Authority and Revelation*, 'The misfortune of our age - in the political as well as in the religious sphere, and in all things - is disobedience, unwillingness to obey. And one deceives oneself and others by wishing to make us imagine that it is doubt. No, it is insubordination: it is not doubt of religious truth but insubordination against religious authority which is the fault in our misfortune and the cause of it' (OAR, 1955, p.xviii).

### **a secular society**

With the erosion of ethico-religious values in the life of society and the subsequent relativistic and pragmatic structure of social relations, SK believed the nature of society is dramatically changed. As we saw in chapter two, ethical concerns in SK are understood in terms of the individual's relationship to the 'eternal' or 'divine' aspect of their being. That is to say, religious conviction is ethical in nature. If one removes the ethico-religious grounding of human being then it follows that human behaviour and relations will be effected and altered. Moreover, as morality is defined in terms of acting in a way that is true to one's self, the relations that evolve will be contrary to the essential nature of humanity. It is these two propositions that are behind SK's understanding of what he calls a secular age.

#### **1] 'demoralisation'**

It, therefore, follows that the first characteristic of a secular society is 'demoralisation' - the loss of moral and religious absolutes. SK believes that the erosion of ethico-religious values in society results in indifference, as people no longer have strong religious or ethical convictions as there is nothing in which to believe. Thus the normal state of society, although susceptible to evil, is one of disinterest. 'The present generation, wearied by its chimerical efforts, relapses into complete indolence. Its condition is that



of a man who has fallen asleep towards morning: first of all come great dreams, then a feeling of laziness, and finally a witty or clever excuse for remaining in bed' (PA, 1962, p.34).

SK stresses 'no one is any longer carried away by the desire for the good to perform great things, no one is precipitated by evil into atrocious sins' (PA, 1962, p.46). People do not consider themselves highly virtuous or significantly corrupt, and so they adopt an ambiguous attitude towards morality not wishing to be evil, but neither desiring to be too good. This same ambiguity characterises their attitude to the state and to religion. People accept Christian institutions and ideals while they 'surreptitiously interpolate that it involves no decisive thought' (PA, 1962, p.34). And so, people become indifferent to the political, moral and religious realities that surround them. As SK insists, 'being without passion, the age has lost all feeling for the values of eros, for enthusiasm and sincerity in politics and religion, or for piety, admiration and domesticity in everyday life' (PA, 1962, p.41). The normal state of society is one in which mediocrity and indifference predominate.

## 2] 'the levelling process'

Therefore, the logical outworking of the loss of ethico-religious values in society is that individual ethical and religious convictions come to be undermined. Yet this leads to a second characteristic of a secular age which is that people's behaviour is not governed by individual convictions, but public consensus. This creates what SK calls the 'levelling process' - a force within society which precipitates social conformity and the loss of individual identity. As he writes in his journal - under the heading, 'A double levelling down, or a method of levelling down which double-crosses itself' -, 'With the daguerreotype [which has just been invented] everyone will be able to have their portrait taken - formerly it was only the prominent: and at the same time everything is being done to make us all look exactly the same - so that we shall only need one portrait' (pap.x 2 A 7 [JP4166]).

SK believed in the absence of individual religious and ethical conviction, significance, meaning, and identity are defined primarily in relation to others. This was seen for SK in the democratisation movement throughout Europe which he believed expressed the need in the wake of the crisis in religious and ethical authority to define political power in terms of social consensus. As he writes:

Balloting [which is essentially the life-principle in government by the people; the numerical] is the destruction of everything great and noble and holy and loveable and, above all, of Christianity, since it is a deifying of worldliness an infatuation with this world. Christianity is the exact opposite. [1] Purely formally. For Christianity is eternal truth, and this abolishes balloting altogether. As eternal truth, Christianity is entirely indifferent as to whether something has the majority behind it or not. But in abracadabra of balloting, the majority is proof of truth; whatever lacks it is not truth, and whatever has it is truth. Frightful spiritlessness [2] Realiter Christianity is directly opposed. For Christianity, as militant truth, assumes that here in this wretched world truth is always in the minority. Consequently: from the Christian point of view, truth is in the minority; according to balloting, the majority is truth. Indeed! (PV, 1962, p.103).

Thus he claims in relation to the collapse of absolute monarchy in Denmark in 1848, 'What brought in a new government was not wisdom, patriotism, and the like, but an expression of demoralisation. And what will overthrow the new government will again be envy, caprice, pettiness, and the like; it is not the noble, the good, which triumphs - no, it is the same demoralisation which has taken on a new shape' (pap.ix A 303 [JP4149]). However, SK concern was not to resist democratic reform, as he 'fully acknowledges the competence of parliaments and people in all purely material and temporal matters', but to highlight that social consensus, and not ethical and religious conviction, was the driving force behind Danish society (PV, 1962, p.101).

SK argues the individual in a secular age finds it 'too venturesome a thing to be himself, far easier and safer to be like the others, to become an imitation, a number, a cipher in the crowd' (PA, 1962, p57). The individual as he or she has no absolute religious or ethical convictions finds it impossible to stand up against the crowd. And so, in the 'levelling process' the individual is subordinated to the rule of the 'majority', for as no point of reference exists for the behaviour of the individual outside of the social matrix, he or she comes to be conditioned by the 'majority', even if the individual does not profess the same values as this 'majority' (pap.viii 1 A 667 [JP4144], pap.ix A 4, 124 [JP4852, 4962], pap.x 3 A 241, 652 [JP4334, 4873], pap.x 1 A 37 [JP6307]). 'The profound significance of the levelling process lies in the fact that it means the predominance of the category "generation" over the category "individuality"' (PA, 1962, p.52)

SK stresses a type of social determinism takes place, which the individual is incapable of being freed from without a religious encounter. (PA, 1962, p.52). Thus a dialectic relationship is proposed in his thought. The individual's loss of ethico-religious conviction gives rise to the masses and the masses alienate the individual from any sense of individual accountability and responsibility.

For instance, SK argues that with public consciousness as the mediator of human relationships and the basis of community the sense of individual moral responsibility decreases: 'A generation, a people an assembly of the people, a meeting or a man, are responsible for what they are and can be made ashamed if they are inconstant and unfaithful; but a public remains a public' (PA, 1962, p.69, see also pap.x 3 A 656 [JP2958]). The very nature of public consciousness makes the individual perceive himself or herself as a fraction of the whole and so lessens the sense of accountability, and the impersonal and depersonalised nature of relationships that the public fosters allows people to act in ways that would seem unthinkable in other contexts (PV, 1962, p.112). As Rougemont notes in the face of Communism, Fascism and National Socialism, 'SK understood better than anyone and before anyone the creative diabolical principle of the mass: fleeing from one's own person, no longer being responsible, and therefore no longer guilty, and becoming at one stroke a participant in the divinized power of the Anonymous' (Rougemont, 1962, p.94).

#### c) 'dehumanisation'

In view of this, SK claimed that the loss of ethico-religious values inevitably resulted in social structures and relations that 'dehumanised'. There was a negation of what it meant to be human through the loss of moral responsibility and accountability through the way in which people's lives were defined in terms of consensus rather than conviction. Yet this also meant that human self-interests could be given far freer expression, for individual moral constraints had been significantly weakened and this led to oppressive and manipulative social relations.

SK maintains 'the negative unifying principle' in a secular society 'is selfishness within the individual and its results in the selfishness of the society around him' (PA, 1962, p.51). With the loss of the eternal the temporal takes on an added significance. Instead of 'religious renunciation of the world, adhered to with daily self-denial', the individual becomes preoccupied with seeking his or her own material self-interests (PA, 1962, p.42). Yet this self-interest is a 'unifying principle' because in an egalitarian and democratic age the only way to safeguard one's self-interests is to become part of an association (PA, 1962, p.59). Therefore, SK understood nineteenth century Danish society as a series of conflicting temporal self-interests, as individuals and groups attempted to safeguard their own position within the existing social structures.

Yet with public opinion and social consensus at the centre of the life of the new order, the influencing of the public is seen to be paramount in safeguarding individual and group interests. In a secular and democratic age the manipulation of public perception is the fundamental organising principle of social relations. As SK insists:

Here, again, is the tragedy of history: once again the principle of the crowd [and now, with the prevalent culture and aided by the press this concept will have an utterly more frightful power than in ancient times] has been established. "The crowd" is the authority. "The crowd" is god; "the crowd" is truth; "the crowd" is power and honour. As a result it is now merely a matter of gambling with this "crowd" just as one gambles with money: thus "the crowd" is everything, and the only thing that matters is getting control of it, getting it on his side. All things bow before this power. (pap.viii 1 A 538 [JP2933]).

A secular age, therefore, is an age of manipulation. Society is a market place in which everything must be sold to the populace. 'A revolutionary age is an age of action; ours is the age of advertisement and publicity' (PA, 1962, p.36). In politics, for instance, SK writes, 'the art of statesmanship will become a game. Everything will turn around getting the multitude pollinated, with torches and with weapons, indifferent, absolutely indifferent, as to whether they understand anything or not' (pap.viii 1 A 538 [JP2933]).

Thus SK's understanding of his society implies that it is the outworking of the self-interests of specific groups who in a highly manipulative age have come to control public opinion in such a way that it serves their own ends. SK saw this manipulative self-interest throughout Danish society. Apart from the obvious outworking in the realm of commerce, he saw it in politics where he believed several socio-political movements were exploiting the rural population for their own ends. In particular, he took exception to Grundtvig using the peasant population as means by which to bolster his own political and ecclesiastical influence. Grundtvig's self-serving religious nationalism was responsible for fostering much of the nationalistic fervour that proved disastrous for Denmark and its people.

A secular society, therefore, is characterised by SK not in terms of the absence or marginalisation of religious belief and institution, but by the erosion of ethico-religious values. If social structures and relations deny human worth, depersonalise human relationships, and negate a true sense of individual identity and meaning, then no matter how religious a society may appear it is essentially secular, the process of secularisation completely changing the individual's perception and experience of the world.

Human self-alienation results in a social matrix that de-humanises and depersonalises the life of the individual (PV, 1962, p.153ff.) The loss of the spiritual dimensions of human existence inevitably creates a society in which a person's experience of life is less than human, for in SK religion embodies a true humanity (pap.xi 3 B 53, 57 [JP6943, 6947]).

Turning now from this analysis of nineteenth century Danish society I want to consider how the *Attack* relates to SK's understanding of the socio-political context in which he wrote. I propose to look at two possible interpretations; the first is a contemporary variant on the traditional school of interpretation that understands the *Attack* as principally a critique of the historical institution of Christendom. That is to say, it sees the *Attack* as SK's attempt to bring about a separation of Church and State as he believed the secular socio-political forces at work in society could no longer be reconciled with those of the Christian Church.

The second suggests that the *Attack* should be seen not as a call for disestablishment, but as a call for a new and effective clerical witness in the face of the secular nature of society. It acts as an attempt to re-introduce an ethico-religious basis into social relations and structures. Thus one interprets the *Attack* in terms of a secularising intent, the other in terms of a 'de-secularisation impulse'.

### 3.2 political perspective

Accepting that SK's thought is rooted in the assumption that Christianity cannot be isolated from its socio-historical context, and that the critical question for SK is the relationship between this context and the transcendent nature of Christianity, it has been argued that the *Attack* is primarily a call for 'a divorce between religion and the State, the disestablishment of Christianity' (Plekon, 1982).

This interpretation suggests that SK's work is directed at the confusion in Denmark which existed between religious and political concerns, created by the whole notion of Christendom. It is argued that his convictions as to the distinctive boundaries of political and religious concern, forced him to take up a position in which he advocated the separation of church and state, so as to ensure the peculiar nature of Christianity. Only in the total dismantling of the traditional aristocratic-conservative synthesis of church and state could Christianity safeguard itself from socio-political assimilation.

The *Attack*, therefore, is seen to be a call for an end to the 'time-honoured and comfortable marriage of the "horizontal" element of traditional society and the "vertical" element of transcendence, a synthesis in which religion has served as the guarantor of social stability, moral values, and personal significance' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.7).

### **Kirmmse's thesis**

Bruce Kirmmse, in his comprehensive thesis looking at SK's political development, provides one of the most fervent and persuasive arguments for this reading of the *Attack*. He insists:

SK's task in the early 1850's was, in the face of radical political and social change, to teach his society that it was now imperative to hold politics and religion separate. The conservative partisans of the ancient regime had to be made to realise that the old mixed State was gone forever; the liberals had to be made to respect their own secularism and the mutual boundaries of public and private, politics and religion, material and spiritual concern; and perhaps most of all the newly-enfranchised common man had to be made to realise that while his adulthood as a political man implied membership in groups...his same adulthood as a religious man obligated him to remain, before all else, an integral individual before God (Kirmmse, 1977, p.4).

The thesis suggests SK believed 'the true and proper task of politics is not to usurp the sphere of religion by attempting the impossible, but to be aware of its earthbound nature and to remain within it, dealing with practical and material matters, without claiming any finality or telos within itself; for genuine humanity and genuine happiness are in the sphere of religion' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.495).

SK's political philosophy, therefore, embodied a fundamental and radical dissent from every major stream of political and religious belief in nineteenth century Denmark. It is argued, although SK's earlier work reflected a basic affinity with the conservative mainstream, 'the Heiberg-Mynster-Martensen camp', in his later work he broke away from this historical and religious romanticism, political conservatism and cultural elitism. Yet, according to Kirmmse, because SK refused to align himself with the equally elitist and romantic view-points of the progressive National Liberals, led by Orla Lehmann and H.N. Clausen, or the popular movement of Grundtvig and his followers, his perspective came to be that of a 'liberal' in the 'classical' or 'enlightenment' sense (Kirmmse, 1977, p.347).



The evidence for this, is found in the principles which are seen to shape SK's thought towards the end of his life, as well as in the pages of the *Attack*. For example, Kirmmse argues in 'classic liberalism' the community is ultimately subordinated to the moral, intellectual, and spiritual freedom of the individual, which the community has been established to protect. This perspective 'differentiates the liberal view of politics, in which the whole, the community, is significant in its own right, is the primary moral being, greater than the mere sum of its parts, i.e. the personal interests and private views of each individual' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.345). Thus Kirmmse suggests it is precisely the liberal, as opposed to the democratic, view that SK is advocating in his constant stresses on the primacy of the individual and the notion that the community does not have a status as a moral being.

This same appropriation of liberal themes is also supposedly found throughout the *Attack*. According to Kirmmse, SK's objections to the State's use of the police and legal barriers to force people to recognise their spiritual needs, were clearly 'based upon the liberal vision of secularism and of the virtues of individual daring and initiative which are destroyed by clumsy social-political intervention in the individual, private sector, an intervention which kills daring and promotes mediocrity' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.349). Thus he concludes, 'SK was a liberal in his schematic understanding of politics, if not his merely personal opinions on day to day affairs' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.368).

This schematic understanding of politics inevitably forced SK towards a belief in the separation of church and state. In the rapidly changing social and political climate of nineteenth century Denmark, SK is seen by Kirmmse to have understood the need for the disestablishment of Christianity, so as to allow for the mutual development and growth of the country's political and religious institutions.

SK is portrayed as fighting for a secular society in which the individual, particularly the common man, could follow Christ and work without the intrusion of an established church, all in accordance with liberal principles. The *Attack*, therefore, is a polemic against the conservative synthesis of Church and State which existed under Danish absolutism and a warning against the continuing of such a relationship into the 'People's Church' of the post 1848 constitution. Thus the thesis maintains:

SK's politics should be seen as essentially healthy and enormously fertile and insightful self-criticism of bourgeois liberal society, a criticism from a radically other-worldly Christian point of view which, precisely because of its otherworldly, Christian moorings, does not feel the need to cling to what is known and personally advantageous in worldly matters [namely the aristocratic

conservatism which SK's peers and social background would normally lead him] nor the need to reject what is unknown and threatening in that same world, namely, liberalism, democracy, and the age of "the common man" (Kirmmse, 1977, p.943).

## **SK and the Establishment**

Kirmmse's thesis, therefore, places SK firmly among the ranks of those such as Grundtvig, Lindenberg, and Sorensen, as well as other clergy and laity, who all proposed, with differing emphasis and proposals, the dissolution of the relationship of church and state in Denmark. Yet this reading of SK creates a number of difficulties, for SK appeared very reluctant to identify himself with any such moves against the establishment.

In an open letter of 1851, in reply to the reformer Rudelbach, he declares:

I promise a reward to any one who can point out to me in the whole series of my books a single proposal for a change in the outward form of the Church, or even any trace of such a thing, or anything that even for the short-sighted was remotely suggestive of such a proposal, or might lead to the opinion that I thought the defect might lie in externals, as though I considered external changes necessary, or hoped from them any help (AN, 1968, p.123).

Moreover, he is especially contemptuous of any who might suggest that the principal driving force in his work should be described in terms of 'emancipation', and states quite clearly:

Neither have I ever fought for the emancipation of the Church - just as little as for the emancipation of Greenland's trade, of women, of the Jews or of anything else....In my opinion it is a matter of sensuous delusion if any one imagine that the outer forms hinder him from becoming a Christian, so also it is equally a delusion and the same delusion, if any one imagines that the outer forms can help him to become a Christian (AN, 1978, p.124).

He, therefore, concludes, 'I have never occupied my attention with the affairs of Church and State, since such matters are too high for me, and to deal adequately with them a man of different vision from myself is required, and moreover the matter can quite simply be left to those who are *properly called and appointed* to deal with it' (AN, 1978, p.125 - italics mine).

## progression theory

Kirmmse recognises that statements such as this do pose a problem to his suggested reading of SK. Yet he argues that just as the political evolution of Denmark was 'marked' and 'rapid', so was the development in SK's 'publicly-articulated view of the relation between religion and the social-political sphere', so that by 1854 he 'has come a long way since his disavowal of Rudelbach's attempt to enlist his support for civil marriage' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.543).

To substantiate this he argues that the articles and tracts which make up the *Attack* can be seen to be a gradual progression from a call for an 'admission' that the Christianity of the New Testament does not exist in Denmark, through a demand for a boycott of all 'official Christianity', to a position which insists on the 'permanent, legal and final separation' of church and state. As he explains:

In the beginning SK seems to have had hopes of using this issue to generate debate about the difference between New Testament Christianity and the Christianity of the official Church, thereby inducing the Church to engage in fruitful self-criticism. This failed to happen. SK's attack then moved through the progressive phases of broadening and deepening, until it articulated the final message of unconditional boycott and the complete separation of church and state (Kirmmse, 1977, p.543).

Certainly Kirmmse's claim that there is progression within the *Attack* itself would appear to have considerable justification. Apart from the fact that the *Attack* evolved in response to, and through a process of interaction with, others, SK makes a number of statements which would appear to suggest a shift in his thinking. The most explicit of these is the retraction of the 'forward' of *Training in Christianity*, in an article on May 16, 1855 in the *Fatherland*. In this SK makes it perfectly clear that his previous position on the State Church was no longer tenable. He acknowledges that he has now come to the conclusion that 'the Establishment is, Christianly, indefensible and every day that it endures is a crime' (AUC, 1968, pp.54-55).

In other words, he now accepts the need for the reform of existing ecclesiastical structures. In the fourth edition of the *Instant*, SK elaborates further on this position in an article entitled 'Medical diagnosis'. In this SK supposedly provides the most 'comprehensive' and 'definitive' statement of his evolving understanding of the need for the divorce of church and state. For example, he asks the reader to:

Think of a hospital. The patients are dying like flies. The methods are altered in one way and another. It's no use. What does it come from ? It comes from the building, the whole building is full of poison. That the patients are registered as dead, one of this disease, and that of another, is not true; for they are all dead from the poison that is in the building.

So it is in the religious sphere. That the religious situation is lamentable, that religiously men are in a pitiable state, nothing is more certain. So one man thinks that it would help if we got a new hymnal, another a new alter-book, another a musical service, etc., etc.

In vain - for it comes from...the building. This whole lumberroom of a State Church, which from time immemorial has not been ventilated, spiritually speaking - the air confined in this lumberroom has developed poison. And for this reason the religious life is sick or has died out. For, alas, precisely that which worldliness regards as health is, Christianly considered, disease; and inversely, what Christianity considered as health is regarded by worldliness as disease (AUC, 1968, pp.139-140).

SK, therefore, concludes, 'Let it collapse, this lumberroom, get rid of it, shut all these shops and booths,...make this official ambiguity impossible, put all these men out of commission and make provision for them, these quacks' (AUC, 1968, p.140). Thus Kirmmse argues that in view of these statements there can be no doubt that 'the liberal SK is finally brought, by the close of his career, to embrace the liberal principle of 'a free church in a free state', or, in the words of SK, the principle of 'fresh air'. SK had come to recognise that only 'the total secularisation of society would suffice' to resolve the religious crisis in the life of Denmark (Kirmmse, 1977, p.545).

### **a political rationale ?**

Yet, although Kirmmse is correct in identifying a progression in the thought of the *Attack*, it must be open to question whether this was a result of a change in SK's political convictions. It would appear the principal reason for SK's statement on May 16, 1855 was not that his political and social understanding led him to a belief in a 'free church in a free state', but that he realised that the 'admission' which he sought could not take place without the removal of clerical vested interests which hindered it. SK recognised it was no longer viable to argue that the clergy could maintain an authentic Christian witness in society while representing the interests of the State and perpetrating its socio-political ideals. In an article in the second edition of the *Instant* written on May 17, 1855, entitled 'The task has a double direction', SK explains this:

There would no further task, were it not that this illusion, the fact that men imagine they are Christians, is connected with an enormously big illusion which has a purely external side, the illusion that Christianity and State have been amalgamated, in the fact that the State introduces 1000 functionaries who by the instinct of self-preservation have an interest in not letting men learn to know

what Christianity is and that they in fact are not Christians. For the very existence of these priests is an untruth. Being completely secularised and in the service of the State [royal functionaries, persons of social position, making a career]. He, therefore, concludes 'In the case of this latter illusion one must go to work in another fashion, for the State has the power to do away with it. This then is the other side of the task: to labour in the direction of getting the State to do away with it (AUC, 1968, p.97).

Thus the reason SK gives for changing his stance on the question of reform is not political, but the fact that he has come to realise that to change a person's consciousness, one must address the social structures which shape it. That is to say, his interest in the relationship of church and state would appear to be primarily governed by pragmatic and sociological, rather than political considerations. Disestablishment is very much a secondary theme in the *Attack* which emerges out of SK's concern with the nature of Christian witness.

This is further borne out by the surprising absence of any type of agenda or concrete proposals on how to proceed with the process of disestablishment. If SK's principal concern after the 16 May, 1855 was to usher in a secular society in accordance with liberal ideals one would expect that he would have carefully defined what was required of both the political and religious realms. Yet he does not address the changing nature of the church in society, the separation of civil and religious functions, or the notion of what constitutes a free and democratic society. And even when he is seen to speak of disestablishment it is in an enigmatic and figurative manner.

If one reads through all SK's statements which may be thought to be suggesting some type of ecclesiastical reform it becomes increasingly clear that the only concrete proposal that he made concerning the relationship of church and state is that the clergy should no longer enjoy state funding, 'If the State truly would serve Christianity, let it take away the 1000 livings' (AUC, 1968, p.136). It is, therefore, to claim much more than can be substantiated by the text itself to insist that 'SK explicitly argues for an independent existence of Christianity and a secularisation of politics and culture' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.943). For a careful reading of the *Attack* would appear to suggest that it is primarily concerned with issues surrounding the role of the clergy in Danish society, and not with providing a comprehensive picture of SK's understanding of church and state (AUC, 1968, pp.127-136).

Moreover, another weakness of Kirmmse's thesis is that although it sets out to demonstrate that SK 'increasingly leaves the apolitical "conservatism" and the social void in which many of his contemporaries wrote', it ironically ends up suggesting an 'apolitical' understanding of religion. The fundamental issue behind SK's work is portrayed to be the specific boundaries between the 'individual, private' realm of religion and the 'corporate, public' realm of politics: the latter based on 'the sphere of community and material interests', the former on individual morality and consciousness. As Kirmmse notes, 'The difference, then, between politics and religion is the difference between the manipulation of objects in the material world for the sake of connivance and comfort, and the posture of a subject, the self, in relation to eternity' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.278).

In SK, therefore, religious concern is seen to touch upon a completely different sphere of existence from that of politics. According to Kirmmse, the essence of the *Attack* is to preserve the distinctive boundaries that exist between political and religious concern. SK advocates that politics must not interfere with that which belongs to the 'private world' of the individual, and that religion must not be imposed on 'the sphere of community and material interests' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.8). That is to say, his interest in the political sphere exists 'only to the extent of defining it and limiting it to the sphere of relative independence which was properly its own' (Kirmmse, 1977, p.9).

He, therefore, is seen to suggest a secularised understanding of the socio-political arena and religion, demanding they be allowed to function in 'relative independence'. Yet this interpretation is simply to reinforce the traditional caricature of SK's religious thought. Religion continues to be of little relevance or interest in relation to questions concerning socio-political realities, as it is completely preoccupied with an 'other-worldly' understanding of the single-individual and eternity.

Kirmmse, therefore, although he sets out to negate this conservative apolitical view of SK's work, simply arrives at this same conclusion via a different route. Yet as Kirmmse himself acknowledges, SK's work appears to be highly resistant to this type of interpretation. His writing, although claiming to be completely centred around religious concerns, is preoccupied with the socio-political context in which he wrote, and is significantly shaped by it. Thus SK's work provides an analysis of the socio-political realm from a religious perspective, something which is only possible if he believed Christianity must exist in relation to, and not in a state of independence from, the socio-political realm.



SK, therefore, completely rejected any attempt to present a wholly secularised view of the socio-political order. Religion he believed was essential to the life of society and its political realities. Without the sense of transcendence which religion brings to the socio-political realm, no matter the nature of the political realities, the forces at work within society will be oppressive and de-humanising. As Kirmmse himself notes:

[In SK] religion has no concrete social task which is specifiable as such. But this not to say that religion has no social task. It does have such a task, but the task is a negative one, to keep the interstices of existence open within society which, for its part, is always tending towards casting human existence into final predictable forms. Religion has the negative, critical task of safeguarding transcendence. This is SK's position....It is his further contention that only Christianity, only his "New Testament Christianity", is capable of preserving this social openness, inconclusiveness, or tentativeness, which is a necessary precondition for any real politics or political freedom, in which people are aware of one and another in the full equality and validity of their individuality, and as such interact, form associations, etc. (Kirmmse, 1977, p.7)

Yet Kirmmse fails to reconcile this notion to his thesis that SK was a liberal who believed in a completely secularised expression of political and social activity. If SK's sees religion as essential to the workings of the socio-political realm, then Christianity cannot simply be limited to the 'private sphere' of the individual. SK's staunch support for the idea of a State Church throughout most of his life and his convictions concerning clerical responsibility in the socio-political realm bear witness to this fact. This is also reflected in the increasing emphasis in his writing on the need for the church to stand on the side of the poor and the suffering. Kirmmse's thesis, therefore, would appear to run completely contrary to the de-secularising impetus of SK's work which I want to argue is concerned with the restoration of an authentic Christian witness in relation to the socio-political realm.

### **3.3 Christianity and social change**

If we return to SK's social theory we see that it draws attention to his basic conviction that the Christian religion has very real implications for social structure. The loss of the ethico-religious grounding of society, expressed in religious tradition, creating a social order marked by distorted and oppressive human relationships. Christianity, therefore, is seen as the catalyst for social change, its loss as well as its presence, having the power to change social structure and relations.

Thus Christianity is seen to be one of the most potent forces for social change, for it has the power to transform the basic values and structures that govern the behaviour of a society. In a secular age where what is experienced is a negation of the self and a depersonalising of human relationships it has the potential to restore a true humanity. As SK writes, 'Politics begins on earth and remains on earth, whereas the religious, taking its beginning from above, seeks to transfigure and thereby elevate the earthly to heaven' (PV, 1962, p.112).

However, this view of religious transformation was not the same as the Utopian visions of the Danish liberal democrats or the militant socialists. Such concepts for SK held a naive belief that humanity could simply create a new social order and so set itself free from the oppressive nature of certain social structures and human egotism. Yet SK was adamant that this was simply to replace one form of tyranny with another, the tyranny of the masses taking the place of the tyranny of the king. For instance, in *Works of Love* and *The Point of View* he criticises the Communist notion of human equality through social revolution.

He insists although there is an essential equality among all men, an external expression of this in a secular state can never be accomplished, criticising the revolutionists' idea of trying, 'through the introduction of the 4th estate i.e., all men, to solve the problem of human equality in the medium of secularity - that is, in the medium whose essence is dissimilarity' (PV, 1962, p.114). He goes on to stress, 'Only the religious, with the help of eternity, can achieve human equality in its ultimacy, the godly, the essential, the true, the only possible human equality', for it is only through the Christian religion and ethic that true humanity is to be found (PV, 1962, p.114). To base human equality on anything other than this, and without this first being established, is completely futile.

SK, therefore, believed that if progression was to take place in the life of society it had to come by way of ethico-religious ideals. In particular in the ideals embodied and represented in the person and example of Christ, reflected in the life of the Church and acted out in concrete social actions and roles. Yet SK also recognises that because of the fallen and alienated state of humanity only an approximation to a true humanity is ever to be achieved within the social matrix. The Christian life is a pilgrimage, a 'becoming' rather than a state of 'being'. A radical social reorganisation that attempts to create a new and perfect social order will only ever arrive at an approximation to the ideal.

Nevertheless, despite this and its conservative implications, SK rejects the notion that Christianity should ever simply preserve and sustain the existing socio-political status quo. The church should be 'militant', not 'established' (TC, 1941). For just as social equality cannot be established, even through the intervention of religion, so no social order truly embodies the Christian ethic and a true humanity. Thus the role of Christianity is to constantly challenge and confront the social order with its failure to be what it ought.

Thus SK sees the ethico-religious tradition of Christianity as an ideal which calls to society for its transformation. It is a mirror that reveals the inhumanity and injustice in the social order and demands redress. Not that it will create a Utopian society, but that it will regulate human egotism and the oppressive self-interests of the social order. The alarm, therefore, that SK expresses in the *Attack* towards the contemporary religious situation in Denmark is that this ideal has been suppressed. The secular values embodied in the social order have come to be identified with those of Christianity, and so the Christian religion has lost its power to call forth social transformation. Social change takes place without the influence of the Christian religion and in so doing creates an 'abomination'. A society that negates all that is essentially human.

In SK, therefore, the central issue in his understanding of the relationship between the Christian religion and society is that the relative and temporal world of the social and political orders is continually to be related, and shaped in accordance with, the radical values the Christian ethic embodies. Not that there ever can be absolute solutions in the relative and temporal world of human relations, bound by their finitude and fallibility, but that these can be regulated and shaped in the light of the eternal and absolute.

### **religious representatives**

Yet for SK if such social renewal is to be accomplished it must be through the 'representative individual' who teaches others to be an 'individual before God', and this puts the ordained ministry at the centre of any agenda for social or political renewal. SK believed that the political and social turmoil sweeping across Europe was directly related to the failure of the clerical witness in society. As he insists in a journal entry, 'When a society goes to pieces the way it did in '48, it is not the fault of kings and nobility - but is essentially the fault of the clergy' (pap.x 1 A 644 [JP6469]). They had failed to challenge the pragmatic and relativistic tendencies of the emerging socio-political order,

allowing consensus and 'the rule of the masses' to govern social relationships, rather than an 'ultimate and non-negotiable' sense of truth and morality.

Therefore, SK was convinced that ordained ministry acts as 'the medium through which God's word sounds to the people' (pap.xi 1 A 532 [JP3153]). The clergy are the mediators of the gospel, 'a middle term in Christendom' between God and the people (pap.x 3 A 267 [JP3135]). Thus the nature and role of the clergy define for the majority of people the nature of Christianity. As SK points out in people's perceptions, "'The priest" or "the minister" is regarded as furnishing the superlative of what it is to be a Christian; a man is a Christian, then, within this boundary; it perhaps would even be regarded as presumptuous to want to be a better Christian than the clergyman' (pap.xi 3 B 197 [JP3188]).

Yet the problem for SK is that Protestantism has undermined the importance of the ordained ministry as an 'intermediate authority', a 'middle term', and so lost something of the significance of the clergy as a force for social change and Christian witness. As he writes:

Look at the situation in Protestantism. Yes, of course, it is given, it is fixed, that the ministers we have now are priests. Well, so we are all priests - these ministers are not to be distinguished from other landlords or merchants, or from other secular career men; in short, they are exactly like everybody else - ergo, we are all priests.

The high spirituality which Luther entered into - ah, there is nothing easier in the world to counterfeit [and no one can convince me to the contrary, that when the gospel tells us to give everything to the poor, the simple thing is simply to do it...].

Luther was perfectly right in smashing the egotism of the clergy domineeringly wanting to be the intermediate authority; but, O, he had very poor knowledge of mankind if he could think that it was possible for all of us to become priests, that the only way of doing it in this world was...to result either in tragic excesses or a sinking into sheer secularism (pap.x 3 A 267 [JP3153]).

Thus we find that the whole question of what is required of the clergy as 'a middle term' in Christendom, although not in the exclusive sense of the Middle Ages, took on increasing importance for SK (pap.x 3 A 267 [JP3153]). In his last years, he was preoccupied with what it means for the ordained ministry to be an effective and distinctive medium for God's word in society. Yet he also came to the conclusion that the professional self-interests and the secular values embodied in contemporary ministry could not be reconciled with this task. For as he records in his journals:

It is easy to see that if this medium were entirely selfless, it would be perfect, for then God's word would almost spontaneously and directly sound to the people, since the medium would be free of all disturbing elements.

But the tragedy has always been and still is in the medium....the clergy must just be like everybody else. Thus we get a completely secularised clergy: public officials, bigwigs, men with wives and families, just as trapped in all the temporal nonsense as anyone else. And this is supposed to be the medium through which God's word should sound! Well, if this medium is intended to transmit sound a mattress is also appropriate! No, such a clergy, such a medium, obstructs God's word or renders God's word sounding through it into something entirely different (pap.x 3 A 267 [JP3153]).

SK believed the reason the nature of Christianity was distorted in society was that the identity of the clergy was too closely implicated in the socio-political order and its values. Instead of standing over and against it, they defended it and legitimised it by the values that they themselves embraced. Christianity had come to be identified with the dominant political, social, and cultural forces in society. It had become a servant of a political ideology and a secular philosophy, rather than a witness to the Gospel and its ideals, and it was the professional self-interests of the clergy, secured by the socio-political order, that were the cause of this inhibited clerical witness in society.

### **the 'Attack' and the ordained ministry**

With this understanding of the clergy, SK became very aware of the identification of the ordained ministry with the socio-political order, and this became even more so after the fall of absolute monarchy in 1848. For as we have already noted SK believed that the socio-political order that was evolving was completely opposed to the nature of Christianity. If the clergy, therefore, were to embrace this new age and its secular values, and in fact many were so doing through their political involvement, it would signal a new level of ineffectiveness for the ordained ministry and set back any hope of social and religious renewal.

Behind the *Attack*, therefore, we find the conviction that Christianity should be a force for social change. Yet this belief also led SK to see the occupational identity of the ordained ministry as creating a series of obstacles to such an end. Firstly, the nature of ordained ministry is implicated in the secular values of the socio-political order. What is expressed in the occupational identity of the clergy engages with issues relating to career, social status and influence, and professional and educated elites. 'What we call "priest", "dean", "bishop", indicates a livelihood, like every other employment in the community, and in a community...this profession may be considered one of the most agreeable and highly honoured' (AUC, 1968, p.23).

Just like other occupational bodies, the clergy are governed by very real self-interest. Christianity has become to them 'a livelihood, the surest way to bread and steady promotion' (AUC, 1968, p.19). It not only provides a means by which one is able to support one's family, but it also brings with it social position and influence and power over others (AUC, 1968, p.19, 42). Thus for SK the occupational identity of the clergy expresses the fact that they have been influenced and conditioned by the secular values in the society around them.

In view of this, SK is adamant that what is seen in clerical occupational identity is not a true reflection of the values inherent in the nature of Christianity for these require that the individual stands in opposition to the accepted socio-political norms - 'Christianity is heterogeneous to the world, wherefore the "witness" must always be recognisable by heterogeneity to this world' (AUC, 1968, p.11). And as what is seen in the occupational identity of the clergy is not a heterogeneity, but a 'homogeneity', he concludes it misrepresents Christianity's relationship to those values found in the socio-political order. What SK fears is that these values should come to be seen as synonymous with Christianity itself, and Christianity simply become an expression of a middle-class bourgeoisie set of values sustained by its relationship to a liberal secularised state.

Yet SK also accepts that a professional ministry has a role within society as long as it is understood as 'a concession' to the Christianity of the New Testament (AUC, 1968, p.19). As soon as this is no longer case, and the values of the socio-political order come to be identified with Christianity itself, this signals 'the end of Christianity'. For the professional nature of the clergy becomes a justification of the existing socio-political order and Christianity becomes a means by which this order is sustained and legitimised rather than called into question. It loses its power to act as a force for social change.

### **purpose of the 'Attack'**

This then provides SK's point of departure for his *Attack* on Mynster and the description of him as a 'Witness to the truth'. In response to Martensen, SK insists that as soon as one claims that the 'secularised' values embodied in the nature of Mynster's ministry are an expression of authentic Christianity, then one has made a mockery of Christianity (AUC, 1968, p.23). In this Christianity has become a means of legitimising



the socio-political order, rather than a genuine expression or witness to the Christianity of the New Testament that calls into question the existing socio-political order and acts as a catalyst for social change.

The first part of the *Attack*, therefore, is given over to an attempt to convince the Establishment and rest of the Danish population that what is represented by the ordained ministry is not a 'Witness to the truth' and to call it such is completely inappropriate: 'if they have no mind at all to resemble what the New Testament calls witnesses, Witnesses to the truth, neither must they be called that; they may be called "teachers", "civil functionaries", "professors", "councillors", in short, what you will, only not "Witnesses to the truth"' (AUC, 1968, p.23).

The basic device that SK uses through out his polemic to achieve this end is a constant contrasting of what he perceives as the ideals of the New Testament with the contemporary expressions of ordained ministry. He contrasts the suffering and persecution of the apostles with the royal authorisation and social advancement ministry now brings, the stipends over against the poverty, and the career structure as opposed to martyrdom: In the article in the *Fatherland* on January 29, 1855, he writes:

When in his Word He talks about preaching the doctrine for naught, we understand it to mean that preaching is of course a livelihood, the surest way to bread and steady promotion; when in His Word He talks about preaching the Word in poverty, we understand thereby some thousands yearly in stipend; when in His Word He talks about preaching the Word in lowliness, we understand it as making a career becoming Your Excellency; and by heterogeneity to this world we understand a royal functionary, a man of consequence; by abhorrence for the use and employment of worldly power we understand using and being secured by worldly power; by suffering for the doctrine we understand using the police against others; and by renunciation of everything we understand getting everything, the most exquisite refinements...and at the same time we are witnesses to the truth! (AUC, 1968, p.19).

Yet it is important to note that in doing this SK is not advocating a return to a New Testament pattern of ministry, but rather is trying to show that what is embodied in the contemporary nature of ordained ministry is not to be identified with the essential nature of Christianity, 'I did not give the question this turn: The clergy must be obliged to be Witnesses to the truth. No, I gave it this turn: This signboard must be taken down' (AUC, 1968, p.37).

However, as the *Attack* develops SK's thought began to explore in far greater detail the implications in the professional identity of the clergy. Acutely aware of the professional self-interests involved, SK began to document in his articles the way in which these self-interests are protected through the controlling of public perception. He observes in an article published on April 11, 1855:

No, official Christianity is not the Christianity of the New Testament. Anybody can see that merely by casting a fleeting but impartial glance at the Gospels, and then looking at what we call "Christianity". The reason why this is not seen is that by all sort of tricks of optical illusion the great mass of men are prevented from seeing impartially because the question of Christianity is stated for them at the same time in pecuniary terms, and naturally they do not want to have their eyes opened to what has hitherto been regard as the surest way to bread (AUC, 1962, p.42).

As long as the public believe that the clergy act in their interests, the professional self-interests of the ordained ministry are free to be realised. Thus the supposedly Christian nature of society and the State is seen by SK to serve an ideological end which protects and hides the vested interest of the clergy. Yet this for SK makes it very difficult to reconcile the nature of Christianity and the professional identity of the clergy. For clearly if the socio-political order is such that it affords the occupational body considerable social position and advantage it is unlikely that they will endeavour to undermine the existing social order.

SK's critique, therefore, is seen to have 'a double direction'. It set out to make the people of Denmark aware of the secular nature of the Danish clergy, governed by purely materialistic and utilitarian ends, and to reintroduce the ideal through a stark contrast of the demands of the gospel with the compromised and ineffective witness of the Church, in the hope that this would make people aware of the completely 'secularised' nature of the clergy and society and the need for religious renewal.

The second task, which was related to the first, was to call for an authentic clerical witness. Initially this was thought to be able to be achieved through an 'admission', in the light of demands of the Gospel. That is to say, SK believed it was possible to witness to the truth indirectly, reflecting the 'ideal' through admitting one's failure to be what one ought - in such an admission 'a man honestly confesses what Christianity is, and how he himself is related to it' (AUC, 1968, p.39). Yet in the course of the *Attack* he increasingly came to reject this position, and see 'Witnessing to truth' in terms of a visible opposition to the accepted values of a humanistic and rationalistic socio-political order. The 'witness to the truth' calls for social and political change in the light of

God's own self-revelation. This requires a change in the socio-political values that govern the occupational identity of the clergy (AUC, 1968, p.36).

Thus if we accept this interpretation several things follow. The *Attack* cannot be described as anti-clerical in nature, for it is not a rejection of clericalism, but a recognition of its significance. It is because SK holds such a high view of the nature and significance of the ordained ministry in society that he is so critical of what it has become. Eller, therefore, is wrong to suggest that because SK refused to take the sacraments from a clergyman at the end of his life, demanding a layman should administer them, that he had adopted a sectarian understanding of ministry (Eller, 1968, pp.24-25). For although SK would have nothing to do with the Establishment and its priests in the last weeks of his life, this was not because he no longer believed in ordained ministry or the Church itself, but because he was convinced that the compromise nature of the institution was such that 'Christianity had ceased to exist' (AUC, 1968, pp.32-37). As Snowdon writes:

In the nineteenth century, SK was addressing the matter of pastoral authority with intensity. His frequent abusive *Attack* on the Danish clergy might give one the impression that he holds the ordained ministry, and its authority, in low esteem. On the contrary, however, the vigour of his *Attack* upon the church and its ministry are indicators of how seriously he takes the whole matter of pastoral authority (Snowdon, 1985, p.46)

A second implication is that the *Attack* should be understood not primarily as a critique of the historical institution of Christendom, but as an indictment against the compromised nature of clerical witness in the emerging modern era characterised by its secular values. It attacks the fact that the Danish clergy have failed to influence and shape the changing nature of social structures and relations, and instead have been embroiled in the same values which govern the rest of 'the age of reason'.

Thus the *Attack* is not an attempt to accommodate the changing socio-political trends of society as Kirmmse argues. It is rather trying to resist these trends and the values that are embodied in them. SK's critique has a 'desecularising impulse'. It is attempting to resist the secularising trends in the life of society and protect the ethico-religious basis of the ordained ministry and through this the life of society itself. As SK himself claims, 'I understand it as my task to undertake a complete auditing of all the Christian concepts, to extricate the Christian concepts from the illusions in which we have entangled them, and in so doing to work towards an awakening [in margin: which is urgently needed in Denmark...]'(pap.xi 3 B 53 [JP6943]).

This thesis, therefore, maintains that the principal purpose behind the *Attack* was to address the underlying problem of the emerging socio-political order - the absence of an effective clerical witness. In so doing, it provides a critique of the relationship of the ordained ministry to the socio-political order in nineteenth century Denmark. It gives a description of the way in which the socio-political order conditions the occupational identity of the clergy and how this subsequently affects the nature of clerical witness and its ability to effect change in the life of society. Thus the *Attack* is of considerable significance in that it explores and raises the whole relationship of the occupational identity of the ordained ministry, the values of a secular society, and the process of social and religious renewal.

## Conclusion

It, therefore, is the contention of this thesis that SK's principal concern in his later writings was for an authentic Christian witness in Denmark to confront in the light of the self-revelation of God the accepted values of a humanistic and rationalistic socio-political order, and it was out of this concern that the *Attack Upon Christendom* emerged. Thus his work contrasts two very distinctive visions of ordained ministry: one that sees it as the guardian of the socio-political order, the other as its protagonist. The basic contention of the *Attack* is that as long as there are professional self-interests that precipitate an identification of ministry with the secular values found in society an effective clerical witness cannot be achieved.

In view of this, SK's critique of the Danish Church is seen not to be an attempt to confine religious and political concerns to distinctive spheres of activity, but rather to be a call for an effective religious presence that is able to act as the catalyst for socio-political change; 'an introducing of Christianity into Christendom', that allows the Church through its ordained ministry to call the socio-political order to account for itself and to change in the light of the eternal nature of God. As SK writes in one of his last journal entries, 'My task is to make room so that God can have access' (pap.xi 2 A 250 [JP6939]).

## Chapter Four

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# On being a 'Witness to the Truth'

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As we have noted in the previous chapters, according to SK, his age reflected a social and political order in which the Christian religion had lost its formative influence in social relations. The individual's self-alienation from the 'eternal' and 'divine' had precipitated a process of secularisation defined by a crisis in moral, religious, and political authority. SK attributed this situation to the failure of the clergy to provide an effective Christian witness in society. He accused the Danish clergy of an inept presentation of the radical nature of the gospel and the demands of Christ in the face of secular values. In 1850 he wrote, 'Christianity can only be communicated by witnesses, i.e. by men who existentially express what they proclaim, realise it in their lives' (pap.x 3 A 59 [JP 3499]). It was this thought that guided his subsequent thinking about the socio-political structures of society and Christianity's power to effect social change.

It is the contention of this thesis, therefore, that the *Attack Upon Christendom* should be read in the context of this concern with a clerical witness in a secular age. Yet if we accept this several questions must follow. Firstly, although SK clearly identifies the clergy as a force for social change, it must be asked how he envisages this? Is he advocating that the clergy should take a leading role in political or social movements or is he proposing a more indirect form of witness? Secondly, what are the obstacles that he sees to this witness in the context in which he writes? And finally, along what lines does he look for the solution to the ineffectiveness of the clergy in effecting social change in a secular age?

In this chapter, I propose to look at each of these questions and thereafter ask what relevance SK's critique has in a contemporary context. In subsequent chapters, therefore, I will go on and look at how secular values shape clerical identity in Britain



today, with particular reference to professionalisation. I want to specifically ask, in view of SK's critique, whether such values hinder or aid the work of the clergy and to what extent they affect the ability of the clergy to precipitate social change.

## **The militant gospel**

SK's understanding of the nature of Christian witness was rooted in the conviction that Christianity reflects a reality that transcends the world in which it is found. In reaction to the Hegelian schools of thought and the reductionist perspectives of Feuerbach and Marx, SK maintained Christianity always stands over and against human existence and the socio-political structures that sustain it (AN, 1968, p.i -v).

This conclusion came, as Karl Barth observed, not from SK's understanding of God's transcendence, but rather from his awareness of the alienated state of humanity (Barth, 1963). God is alien to the world because humanity has become estranged from God, and so Christianity stands in opposition to what humanity and the world have become. The Church, therefore, should be a 'militant' institution calling into question the accepted norms and values that govern human life and opposing the social structures that sustain human self-alienation. Thus SK's fundamental vision is of a radical Christianity that has the power to change the world in which it finds itself, rather than simply accommodate itself to it. 'What the God of Christianity' wants is a 'world-transformation, a transformation of the actual, the practical world' (pap.xi 2 A 102 [JP561]).

*In Training in Christianity*, one of SK's last published works before he began writing the series of newspaper articles and tracts that made up the *Attack*, he notes the impression given by the ecclesiastical structures and the clergy of the Danish Church is of a 'triumphant', rather than 'a militant' church (TC, 1967, pp.89ff.,207-226). The clergy and the Christianity they represented had lost the ability to engage with and challenge the society in which they lived. The message and life of the church was 'plain and simple conformity' to the socio-political and socio-cultural values of the established order. And as John Elrod notes for SK 'replacing the polemical relationship between Christianity and society with a conciliatory one has the effect of religiously legitimating the existing social order' (Elrod, 1981, p.198).

Thus in SK's eyes Danish Christianity was fraudulent. It had become a 'cultural sedative that tranquillised the pains of misfortune' and legitimated the human quest for power, authority, and profit (pap.x 1 A 213 [JP2484], pap.xi 1 A 414 [JP2448], pap.xi 3 A 574 [JP3334], pap.xi 2 A 51, 81, 212, 327 [JP3099, 3101, 3102, 3124]). It was no longer a force that challenged and questioned the dominant socio-political values of the time. He points out in a journal entry of 1850:

Everything has become reversed. There was a time when the world wanted to fight - then Christianity fought. Now the world is in fraudulent possession of Christianity, and its tactics therefore are: with all its power, at any price, to prevent a show down. It is as when a swindler has misgivings - if the matter goes to court, he has lost - and therefore all his tactics are directed toward keeping it from going to court. In the realm of the spirit this is far easier than in actuality of civil life, for the technique consists in continually counterfeiting the other party's position so that to a certain extent they are saying the same thing - but good God, then we are agreed! (pap.x II A 460 [JP516]).

SK was driven to the conclusion 'Christianity continues to survive after it has been made into the opposite of what it is to be Christian [especially in Protestantism, especially in Denmark]' (pap.xi 1 A 308 [JP405]).

SK wanted to stress that the Kingdom of God cannot find its ultimate end in the democratic liberalism of Clausen, or the Danish nationalism of Grundtvig or even the romantic and cultural ideals of Mynster<sup>1</sup>. Christianity is 'becoming, not being' (TC, 1968, p.98). To declare any political, social or cultural expression as the ultimate end and fulfilment of Christianity is to make God in man's own image. This Mynster and Grundtvig had done, 'each in his own way' (pap.x 2 A 326 [JP1860]). They had converted the Christianity of Denmark into something that 'might thoroughly please and appeal to the natural man, almost as if it were his own invention, as though it talked to him out of his own heart' (AUC, 1968, p.150). Yet this concealed the alienated nature of humanity and the need for religious transformation. It failed in the light of the self-revelation of God in Christ to recognise that all human institutions and relations are 'fallen' and imperfect. Thus SK stresses, 'The deepest confusion of Christianity is the profane and frivolous way in which Christianity has been identified with the world and all are made Christians as a matter of course - in short, the greatest deterioration has been the concept of Christendom' (pap.x 2 A 37 [JP510])<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> SK describes this type of Christianity 'as impossible as doing gymnastics in a straitjacket' (pap.xi 2 A 349 [JP409]).

<sup>2</sup> It is significant that this thought in SK's work deeply influenced those who wrote the Barmen Declaration in 1936 as they resisted Hitler's attempts to manoeuvre the State Church into legitimating the National Socialist government. As SK

In the *Attack Upon Christendom*, however, SK took this concern one step further. He wanted to address what he saw as the fundamental root of the problem. This was the identification of the clergy with the socio-political and socio-cultural ideals of the rest of society. According to the *Attack*, the reason that Christianity no longer expressed a polemical relationship to the social and political forces that shaped Danish society was the clergy had embraced the values of the secular state (AUC, 1968, p.132-133). They no longer reflected a distinctive life-style or occupational identity and this in turn had given rise to the notion that Christianity was synonymous with the existing order.

Thus at the heart of SK's concern over Christendom is the conviction that the gospel cannot be divorced from the one who acts and bears witness to it. As he vividly observes in an aside:

In the magnificent cathedral the Honourable and Right Reverend Geheime-General-Ober-Hof-Pradikant, the elect favourite of the fashionable world, appears before an elect company and preaches with emotion upon the text he himself chose: "God hath elected the base things of the world, and the things that are despised" - and nobody laughs (AUC, 1968, p.181).

SK, therefore, assumes the militant nature of the gospel is lost, not through what is taught, but through what is done. He maintains in Denmark, 'Doctrine, as normally expounded, is on the whole correct. Hence I am not quarrelling about that' (pap.x 3 A 635 [JP6702])<sup>3</sup>. What troubles him is the identification of Christianity and the work of the clergy with the dominant values found in the socio-political and socio-cultural order, and the effect this has on the perception of the Christian gospel. That is to say, in the *Attack* and his other later writings he examines the way in which the 'Witness to the truth' has been compromised in Denmark by the procurement of secular ideals and values in the behaviour and practice of the Church and its clergy.

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observes, 'The established order desires to be totalitarian, recognising nothing over it, but having under it every individual, judging every individual who is integrated in it....Yet he who disparages such an established order is regarded as one who makes himself more than man, and people are offended in him, although in reality he merely makes God God and man man' (TC, 1968, pp.92-93).

<sup>3</sup> SK's own work draws on established Christian orthodoxy in order to work out 'the decisively Christian existential categories as distinct from existential understanding proper to philosophies of ethical and religious immanence' (pap.x 3 A 635 [JP6702]).

## 4.1 SK's Christology

This absence of an effective Christian witness for SK was related to a deficient Christology. He believed that it was because of a failure to take seriously 'the offence' of Christ that Christianity had become an ideological tool through which to legitimate the socio-political structures of society (TC, 1968, pp.80-144). For in Christendom, the gospel of Christ was seen to affirm and justify, rather than challenge and call into question, the social structures and values that shaped society's life. The offence of Christianity, therefore, that revealed the egotistically and self-serving ends of human society was suppressed and the alienated nature of social relations and structures denied.

Thus because the offence had been removed the existing socio-political and socio-cultural order had come to reflect the union of the divine and the human, rather than humanity's estrangement from God. Yet for SK the thought, 'that the established order has become something divine or is regarded as divine constitutes a falsehood which is made possible only by ignoring its origin....And it is precisely this deification of the established order which constitutes the constant rebellion, the permanent revolt against God....[it] is the invention of the indolent worldly mind, which would put itself at rest and imagine that all is sheer security and peace, that now we have reached the highest attainment' (TC, 1968, p.89). With such a perception of society, 'the enjoyment of life becomes the worship of God' (pap.xi 1 A 149 [JP6876]). Christianity became a means of legitimating the alienated nature of humanity and the temporal self-interests of human society. Thus the notion of Christianity as that which stands in opposition to the social and political forces at work in society is completely disregarded.

### 'the offence'

Yet in order to understand the nature of the offence of Christianity it is important to notice two very important elements in SK's Christology. Firstly, Christ's appearance in history is not the object of faith, but rather the occasion for faith. Salvation involves the restoration of the eternal component of human being, the addressing of human self-alienation. It is concerned with the recovery of a true humanity. Thus Christ acts as the

means by which a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal held together by the creative present is again established within the individual<sup>4</sup>.

As we saw in chapter two and three, at the centre of SK's thought is the notion that humanity is alienated from the divine. According to SK, people have turned away from the eternal, the subjective reality of God in human consciousness, and have lost the sense of ethical obligation rooted in religious awareness. People have become absorbed in finite things, living for temporal ends, alienated from the source of being<sup>5</sup>. Thus the individual's existence is no longer defined by a relationship to God, but exclusively by the external political, economic and social relations which surrounds them. And society, preoccupied with temporal, social, and historical concerns, reflects this alienation in its structures and relations.

Therefore, salvation in SK is a process of 'renewal'. Salvation 'is not something completely new but something which restores the past' (Diem, 1955, pp.74-75). Through faith the individual does not 'leave behind him his past history in order to become something entirely different. The aim must not be that man should seek to escape from his temporality and finitude, but that he should seek to regain these in their plenitude of meaning. Finitude must not be left aside, but rather saved and redeemed....This renewal takes place in the moment of faith when revelation brings simultaneity, and for the Christian the passage into historical becoming is effected' (pap.viii 1 A 650 [JP6135]).

Christ restores the eternal and the absolute demands this makes on humanity, by acting as the medium by which humanity is again put in touch with the source of human being. God must stand before the human race and confront them with the need to be reconciled to himself. Yet this necessitates because of the alienated nature of humanity that the eternal must become an object of historical concern, subject to temporal concern. [This is the point at which SK's Christology begins in *Philosophical Fragments* as he asks in his 'thought-experiment' how can one have 'a historical point of departure for an eternal consciousness'].

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<sup>4</sup> As SK observes, 'The synthesis of body and soul must be established by the spirit; but the spirit is the eternal and operates therefore only when it establishes the first synthesis as identical with the second, that of the temporal and the eternal' (CUP, 1945, p.414).

<sup>5</sup> 'The sphere of non-being is everywhere present as nothingness from which there arose deceptive appearance, sin, sensuality divorced from the spirit, time divorced from eternity' (CD, 1944, p.77).

However, in restoring the true nature of humanity as a temporal being in relationship to the divine, Christ again brings the requirements of eternity to bear on human existence, and this reveals the sinful condition of human society. Christ, unlike Socrates, acts as an occasion by which the individual discovers that they do not possess the 'truth'. He reveals to humanity their true state of self-alienation. 'The teacher, then, is the god himself, who acting as the occasion, prompts the learner to be reminded that he is untruth and is that through his own fault' (PF, 1938, p.15)

SK argues, 'Christ did not come to abolish the law - he himself is the fulfilment of the law, and has presented himself as the prototype' (pap.x 4 A 366 [JP1905]). He is the embodiment of what humanity should be. He brings in a unique way the demands of the eternal to bear on the temporal. In so doing, he reveals how far away from the truth and how far short of what God requires human life and social structures are. He exposes human self-interests and the living for temporal and finite ends, demonstrating that that which humanity has made absolute is relative and needs to be subordinated to the demands of eternity. And it is this which is the 'scandal' and 'offence' of Christianity.

In *Training in Christianity* SK illustrates the way in which Christ brings this offence by contrasting human and divine compassion:

Let one who might have a higher station in life - I do not say, let him, while maintaining the distinction of his station, give much to the poor, benevolently [i.e. as a superior] seek out the poor, and the sick, and the wretched - no, let him give up this distinction and seriously seek his society among the poor, live completely with the humble classes, with labours, hod-carriers, mortar-mixers and the like! Ah, in a quiet moment when one does not see him, most people perhaps may be touched by the thought of it; but as soon as they see him in this company with this following, see him who might have been something great in the world coming along in close companionship with a brick-layer on his right and a broom-maker's apprentice on his left - what then?

First of all they will have a thousand ways of explaining that it is by reason of his eccentricity and obstinacy and pride and vanity that he lives thus. And even if they refrain from attributing to him such motives, they will not be able to reconcile themselves to the sight of him - in this company. Even the best men, generally speaking, will the moment they see it be tempted to laugh (TC, 1968, p.62).

But what does this reveal to us? It reveals 'everybody is for his own class' (TC, 1968, p.63). SK claims that this 'partiality constitutes a fixed point, which explains why human compassion never goes beyond a certain degree....The greengrocer's compassion is embroiled in one sole reference, a reference first of all to the other greengrocers, and then to the alehouse keepers' (TC, 1968, p.63). And so it is with



every class. If one seeks to express compassion for those of a lower class, one does so without sacrificing one's economic and psychological identity within one's own class<sup>6</sup>. Human compassion is unwilling to sacrifice an egotistic and prudential identification with class position. It is only in poetic and philosophical conceptions of compassion, and not in practice, that people identify with divine compassion.

Yet Christ challenges the legitimacy of class boundaries by asserting that compassion must be neither selectively offered nor expressed with one's class interests in view. Unlike human compassion, which is always 'only to a certain degree', the compassion of Christ is 'unconditionally a sacrifice' because it represents 'a limitless abandon in its concern for the suffer alone...' (TC, 1968, p.62, 64). It is an expression of limitless care for the well-being of the other without seeking egotistically to protect itself. However, this is offensive because it requires the limitless abandonment of the psychological and economic walls of security guaranteed by class distinctions. Such an act is offensive not only because it is impudent but also because it is impractical, since its results cannot be predicted or guaranteed.

The compassion of Christ, therefore, closely allied with his powerlessness and humility calls into question the existing social order. It demonstrates that the self-revelation of God in Christ is 'unwilling to subordinate itself to the established order' and 'protests against its claim to be the truth' (TC, 1968, p.87). Thus Christ and his claims offend, for he reveals the alienated state of human existence and exposes the temporal and relative nature of the ends that are served in social relations and structures (pap.x 4 A 209 [JP4214]).

Yet this brings us to the second element in SK's understanding of the offence of Christianity. This concerns his assumption that humanity needs to be confronted with the demands of eternity and the true nature of human being in the self-revelation of God in Christ in order to know the depth of their guilt and alienation. SK writes:

The idea by which Christianity most decisively and qualitatively differentiates itself from heathendom is precisely the idea and doctrine of sin; and accordingly Christianity quite consistently assumes that neither heathendom nor the natural man is aware of the nature of sin, it assumes in fact that the self-revelation of God is necessary in order to disclose what sin is. It is indeed not the case, as a superficial understanding assumes, that the doctrine of the Atonement

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<sup>6</sup> For example, SK derides those 'journalists who live of the pennies off the poor, under pretence of asserting and defending their rights...' (TC, 1968, p.63).

constitutes the essential distinction between heathendom and Christianity. No, we must go far deeper, with sin and the doctrine of sin, as Christianity indeed does. What a dangerous objection it would be against Christianity if heathendom has a definition of sin which Christianity had to recognise as true (quoted by Diem, 1955, pp.73-74).

Thus for SK the self-revelation of God in Christ does not in the first instance effect reconciliation between God and humanity, but rather brings an awareness of human sin.

SK, therefore, very much like Luther sees the Gospel of Christ as both law and grace. The self-revelation of God in Christ does not remove the 'qualitative distinction' between alienated humanity and the divine, but rather reveals it for what it is. Yet it is through encountering the offence and scandal of Christianity that individuals are brought to the point where they acknowledge they cannot resolve their alienated and sinful state, but only believe that God has done so. The same relationship that communicates the judgement of God on alienated humanity, revealing human guilt, also declares the reconciliation of humanity to God. It proclaims the distance between God and fallen humanity, while at the same time bring them together. As Diem observes in SK 'if man wishes to realise the fact of sinfulness and to believe in the forgiveness of sin, he must always do so in tension with the resistance called forth by the paradox itself, i.e. he must overcome through faith the possibility of scandal' (Diem, 1955, p. 77).

The offence of Christ guards against an intellectualised and detached approach to Christianity. It 'makes the truth a heart-felt matter of inwardness', for Christ does not simply confront an individual with his or her relationship to a historical figure or faith, but confronts him or her with an existential reality (TC, 1968, p.88). The eternal in history, forces the individual to consider how far he or she is from what he or she should be as a temporal being engaged by eternity. Christ, therefore, appears as a 'teacher' who 'insist upon inwardness in contrast with empty externalism, a teacher who transforms externalism into inwardness' (TC, 1968, p.87). Thus the individual comes to Christ not as an academic to a matter of religious and historical interest, but as a sinner in need of forgiveness<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> It is this regard that SK claims, 'one can "know" nothing at all about "Christ"; he is the paradox, the object of faith existing only for faith' - (TC, 1968, , p28).

The proclamation of Christ, therefore, exposes the relative, finite and fallen nature of human society. It declares human relations and the structures that evolve from this as sinful. The appearance of Christ as the paradigm of reconciled humanity constantly reminds us of our failure to truly live as temporal beings in relationship to the divine. It communicates to us our failure to be not only what we ought, but what we are. Thus 'witnessing to the truth' is really to witness to what SK calls the 'untruth' of society. It is to uncover the egotistical and self-serving purposes of human life in the light of Christ and to call forth change.

Yet SK's Christology goes beyond the resisting of an ideological interpretation of Christ. His thought presents an ethical interpretation of Christianity that wants to provide a challenge and an alternative to the values that are found within society<sup>8</sup>. It challenges the individual to break from a religiously abstract notion of the gospel and to recognise the ethical imperatives that it brings to bear on human existence. Thus one cannot divorce the acceptance of Christ and the demand that one 'must conform to his life' (pap.x 3 A 171 [JP1864]).

## 4.2 The ethical imperative of the gospel.

SK's Christology leads to the conclusion that the message of Christianity must call into question the social and political structures that reflect the self-alienation of human existence. However, it also implies that in the self-revelation of God in Christ an ethical obligation is brought to bear. In Christ we are confronted with what humanity would be if we were true to ourselves, Christ embodying a 'true humanity'. It is in relation to this awareness of what we should be in the light of Christ that we come to acknowledge our egotistical and self-serving lives. Thus for SK it is through the application of ethico-religious ideals that the process of social transformation takes place. Christianity influences the development of social relations and structures through drawing attention to the contrast between an alienated and reconciled humanity.

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<sup>8</sup> SK writes, 'In Christendom life is completely unchristian in terms of what it means to live together with the common man and what this involves...It is unchristian and wicked to base the state on a substructure of men who are totally ignorant and excluded from personal association - even though on Sunday there are touching sermons about loving one's neighbour' (AN, 1968, p.91).

However, SK believed in the modern liberal state common sense is the dominant guiding principle. Common sense advocates the advancement of one's economic and political self-interest, and the shrewd person is one whose morality will not interfere in any significant way with his or her efforts 'to succeed, to win advantages in this world' (FSE/JFY, 1968, p.169). The protection of individual rights, the pursuit of human equality, the growth of economic prosperity, and the ensuring of human happiness and contentment all require in the liberal state the abandonment of 'otherworldly' religious speculation and moralising (FSE/JFY, 1968, p.170). As SK writes, the Danish people 'cannot get it through their heads what use there is in having an absolute requirement, what good it can do, seeing that no one fulfils it, that the absolute has become the unpractical, the foolish, the ludicrous, that they [in rebellion or self-conceit] invert the situation, seek the fault in the requirement, and become themselves the requirers, requiring that the requirement be changed' (FSE/JFY, 1968, p.168). Thus the idea of an ethical imperative rooted in God's self-revelation that stands over all human life is completely alien, yet it is exactly what is called for.

In *Judge for Yourself*, SK writes, 'Along with the growth of common sense there gains ground a certain sort of lore, the lore concerning what we men actually are, or are in these times, the moral situation regarded as the product of natural causes, explained by geographical situation, climate, prevailing winds, rainfall, distribution of water, etc....But how men ought to be, about God's requirement, about the ideals - about this less and less inquiry is made in proportion as common sense increases' (FSE/JFY, 1968, p.169). Thus the ethical imperative of the Christian gospel is seen to be an impossible ideal that should be rejected in the interest of prudence and common sense. Yet the role of Christianity is to reintroduce this ethical imperative into the modern world.

The claims of Christ as 'oriented to the universally human, of which everyone is capable' must again be heard<sup>9</sup>. The modern state governed by the balancing of power among the most significant interest groups will only be challenged if the ideal is brought to bear. Ethical concerns must become part of all matters pertaining to the organisation of human life. In order for this to happen Christianity must develop in the light of God's self-revelation the ability to attack the ideological basis of power and self-interest in

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<sup>9</sup> SK writes 'everyone must be measured by the Pattern, the Ideal. We must get rid of all the bosh about this being said only to the Apostles, and this only to the disciples, and this only to the first Christians, etc. Christ no more desires now than He did then to have admirers [not to say twaddlers]. He wants only disciples. The 'disciple' is the standard: imitation and Christ as the Pattern must be introduced' - (FSE/JFY, 1968, p.207).

society. It needs to call for a new ethic that undermines class boundaries and distinctions - an ethic that necessitates 'one wills not oneself but the other as an end with the hope that others will so will oneself' (Elrod, 1981, p.217). Yet if such an ideal is to be expressed Christianity can no longer serve as a legitimisation to particular claims to power or self-interests within the State.

Christ and his kingdom cannot ultimately be identified with any socio-political or socio-cultural phenomenon (pap.xi, 1 A 149 [JP6876]). 'It is really impossible to be a Christian in this way, since the establishment as a true arena for religiousness gives all Christian qualifications as unchristian, conciliatory perspective upon the temporal; whereas the true Christian perspective for every Christian qualification is polemically oriented towards finitude...' (AN, 1968, p.34). Human society expresses an alienated humanity bound 'by human fear, by mediocrity, by temporal interests...' (AUC, 1968, p.102). Although the message of Christ comes into this situation and proclaims God reconciled to humanity it does not sanction a coalescing of 'the finite and the infinite, the eternal and the temporal, the highest and the lowest', but reveals the distance between the divine and the egotistical and self-serving nature of humanity (FSE/JFY, 1968, p.138).

Therefore, the implication of this for SK is that Christianity does not effect social change through identifying itself with socio-political or socio-cultural ideals or by forming a party that has a viable programme of economic, political and social reform. It deals much more with ethical realities that are not bound by 'the art of the possible'. As Elrod argues SK's 'secondary literature' advocates 'the primacy of the ethical over the political mediation of human relations' (Elrod, 1981, p.167). That is to say, for SK ethical imperative rather than socio-political programme is the principle way to address the alienated nature of human existence and social structures.

Thus SK proposed 'an ethical rather than a political solution to the problems posed by existing in the state of nature, because the political solution remains within the state of nature and is therefore infected with the disease it intends to cure' (Elrod, 1981, p.162). Only an ideal that brings an 'uncompromisable ethical obligation' is able to effect change. 'Nothing less than a power that can reach the human core can hope to transform the state of nature into a community of ends' (Elrod, 1981, p.162).

Moreover, Elrod argues, 'SK viewed class conflict as a function of egotism, and so long as egotism prevails, so will the class society and its material misery' (Elrod, 1981, p.209). Yet SK insists although the 'modern state...proposes political and economic distribution of power as the method of its eradication', this can never truly resolve the situation (Elrod, 1981, p.209). Purely socio-political solution cannot find the answer to the problem of human self-alienation and its consequences at a co-operate and individual level. Christianity must always be more than just a political programme or movement. It must represent an ethico-religious ideal that transforms the individual and makes him or her conscious of his or her moral obligation towards others.

SK believed that social change that is not governed by the ideal, yet operates in the name of religion creates an ideological expression of the gospel. In Denmark, the Grundtvigians and their attempts to precipitate social and political reform represented for SK just such a capitulation to a socio-cultural movement (pap.viii 1 A 591 [JP6122], pap.x 2 A 338 [6570], pap.x 6 B 130 [6558]). Their perspective on marriage, the struggle for political freedom, and Danish identity epitomised a distortion of the Christian message in the wake of a nationalistic political and social movement. Their simple-minded identifications of the Peasant party's struggle for political freedom with Christian hope, of marriage with religious obligation, and Danish destiny with divine providence and election all distorted the true nature of Christianity (pap.x 4 A 58 [JP6735]; pap.xi 1 A [JP6876]).

Ultimately this undermined the militant nature of Christianity, for although Grundtvigians were a very powerful religiously motivated force for social change in Denmark, when eventually they did become the dominant political force in the 1850's they simply became another establishment. And so, Christianity continued to be a way in which to provide a religious legitimisation to a particular socio-political order, as it formerly had been with Mynster. Thus the Grundtvigians came to represent 'precisely what Christ came to supersede' (pap.xi 1 A [JP6876]). 'Through identification of the essence of Christianity with political movements and with democratic social institutions, the dialectic elements of Christianity, which is identified with the eternal and ideal component of the self, is lost, and religion is domesticated by those very phenomena that should legitimately be the object of a religious polemic' (pap.iv A 38 [JP198]). Thus as Malantschuk notes, 'The polemical stance of Christianity toward the world is forgotten. In this way the tension between the single individual and the world vanishes. The result is the idolisation of the status quo, leading to relaxation and to internal struggle within oneself and external struggle with the world' (AN, 1977, p.129).



Yet it would be wrong to suggest that SK completely divorced socio-political concerns from Christianity. As we saw in chapter three he believed that religion had a fundamental bearing on social and political realities. The very fact that he defended and supported the Established nature of Christianity in Denmark throughout most of his literary career is also very significant. Yet what concerned him most was not that Christianity should have political and social consequences, but that such consequences should be identified too closely with Christianity itself. That is to say, relative and absolute concerns should become confused.

According to SK, Christianity does not change society by making eternal demands temporal, but by bringing the full force of eternity to bear on the temporal through the self-revelation of God in Christ. Thus he writes in relation to democracy, 'I never have denied, that in relation to all temporal, earthly, worldly matters the crowd may have competency....But it is not of such matters I am speaking,....I am speaking about the ethical, about the ethico-religious, about "the truth", and I am affirming the untruth of the crowd, ethico-religiously regarded, when it is treated as a criterion for what "truth" is' (PV, 1967, p.110). He accepts the validity of socio-political concerns as long as these are always acknowledged to be relative and imperfect ends in themselves.

However, one further point in relation to SK's emphasis on the primacy of the ethical over the socio-political is that this concept was developed not just in relation to the individual who was in 'a natural and ethically reprehensible opposition to all other selves', but also in relation to the social structures that had come to sustain and precipitate such alienation (pap.x 4 470 [JP534]). In advocating the primacy of ethical over political realities, SK was not suggesting that one deals with the sin of the individual and this subsequently changes society. On the contrary, the whole thrust of the *Attack Upon Christendom* was that social and political institutions must be challenged and confronted in order to allow for individual self-alienation to be addressed. Therefore, the self-revelation of God in Christ called into question not just private, but also public interests.

In fact, the *Attack* vividly illustrates the way that SK envisaged the use of the ideal in transforming social relations and structures. As he describes, 'It is in the direction of seeing what can be done by way of clarifying men's concepts, teaching them, moving them by means of the ideals, bringing them by pathos into a state of suffering, stirring them up by the gadfly-sting of irony, derision, sarcasm, etc., etc.,' (AUC, 1968, p.97).

The *Attack*'s purpose was to bring the ethical imperative of the self-revelation of God in Christ to bear on the ecclesiastical structures of the Danish Church and its unholy alliance with the state (AUC, 1968, p.97). Through the ideal it set out to reveal the self-interests and the egotistical and ideological nature of Danish religion and the clergy who propagated it. And it was SK's hope that this would act as a catalyst for change and bring about a genuine clerical witness in society. Yet this raises the question what is necessary for the radical requirements of Christ to be effectively represented and the ideal communicated in a secular age?

### **4.3 On communicating the gospel of Christ**

Christianity for SK is always in a state of tension. The Christian who is engaged by the ethical imperative of the gospel of Christ, will be at the same time acutely aware that this is only an ideal towards which he or she works. Thus the Christian and the church exist as part of society implicated in its alienated structures and relations, while at the same time Christ calls them to stand in opposition and to challenge this society. Therefore, the question for SK was how is such a religion able to bring the ethical imperative of the Gospel to bear on society, if in itself it does not reflect this ideal ?

What made this even more complex was that for SK making Christ pertinent was not simply a matter of communicating a series of propositional truths. The self-revelation of God in Christ needed to be communicated in such a way that it impinged on the hearer's existence, for it is an existential not a propositional truth. The challenge was to teach that Christianity is related to the taking down of class barriers and the negating of human self-interests, in such a way that it affected the actual social structures and relations within society.

In 1847 SK discusses in a draft of a lecture entitled, 'The Dialectic of Ethical and Ethical-Religious Communications' the problems involved in communicating in such a way that the communication impinges upon the existence of the hearer. He argues that the 'delusion and confusion of the modern age' is that it wants to apply a scientific methodology to everything, making knowledge a function of depersonalised and objective categories. 'This is the confusion of the modern age, that the ethical is communicated as scholarship and science' (pap.viii 2 B 81 [JP649]) Yet he insists the ultimate aim of ethical and religious awareness, 'is not simply to convey knowledge but

to educate and train as in the sphere of art' (pap.viii 2 B 81 [JP649]). In view of this, SK asked what is necessary for the radical requirements of Christ to be effectively represented, and the ideal communicated, in a secular age?

The conclusion he reaches is that if the gospel is to be communicated in a way that impinges on the life of its hearer it needs to be communicated with 'authority'. The difference 'between education in ethics and education in religiously based ethics is merely this, that ethics straightforwardly concerns the universally human, whereas religious or Christian education must first impart information. Man as such is moral through his awareness of the moral law, but man as such is not Christian through his religious sense; in the latter case a certain amount of communication of knowledge is first required and then the situation is the same in regard to ethics' (pap.viii 2 B 82 [JP650]). Thus 'the one who communicates has authority as regards the information communicated, an authority which is primary' (pap.viii 2 B 82 [JP650]). That is to say, the existence of the individual who is to communicate the truth is to be engaged by that truth.

## imitation

Therefore, SK was convinced that if someone is truly to challenge the existing socio-political order and the social relations that it fosters, the witness's personal existence must reflect the reality of the gospel. The problem in Denmark was that influenced by the modern scientific age and its liberal philosophies religious and social values had been translated into the realm of objectivity, disengaged from personal existence. The consequence of this was that 'dogmatics is seldom handled centrally and essentially' (pap.x 3 A 635 [JP6702]). It is dealt with objectively, as something which does not engage or condition the life of the individual. For instance, in *The Concept of Dread*, SK claims the notion of sin has become completely distorted because it is communicated in terms of a purely 'scientific' and 'objective' reality. Yet to speak as if one is able to stand outside of one's sinfulness, apart from it, is in effect to create an illusion that hides one's true nature, for the individual is always implicated and engaged by his or her sin (CD, 1944, p.23ff.).

This tendency to turn existential realities into propositional notions had had severe consequences for the communication of the gospel. It had removed the idea that the 'imitation of Christ' was a fundamental prerequisite to Christian witness. Yet for SK 'imitation is Christianity' (pap.xi 1 A 391 [JP1932]). He had nothing but contempt and

derision for a view of the atonement that taught the acceptance of an unmerited grace by itself is a sufficient condition for salvation. Salvation required more than 'to appropriate Christ's merit', it demanded one 'to be transformed into likeness to the beloved; otherwise it is merely wanting to profit by the beloved' (pap.x III A 294 [JP1870]).

The idea of Christ the Redeemer had been set over and against the idea of Christ as the Pattern. Protestant theology had lost the sense of the importance of the imitation of Christ, and so the ethical imperative of the gospel and its power to effect change had been lost (pap.xi II A 375 [JP565]). As SK concludes, 'Established Christendom really dates from the time Christmas was declared the supreme festival [in the Fourth Century]. The Saviour of the world is now a baby. And why would anyone want to be saved by a baby? Because men thought: Here there can be no question of imitation' (pap.x III A 776 [JP1893]). And again he writes:

...from generation to generation Christianity in the Church has been transformed egotistically into something more and more according to man's interest: the Atonement makes imitation into a nothing, or we completely cheat or way out of imitation. Then Christendom more and more develops a bad conscience, and the thought that to relate oneself to God should mean to suffer becomes completely foreign; and the very opposite - success and prosperity - become the sign of being related to God - and then Christianity is really abolished (pap.x IV A 499 [JP 1911]).

SK was adamant that as the truth of Christianity was no longer seen to impinge on the existence of the individual, but had become purely propositional, Christianity in its true sense could no longer be said to exist (AUC, 1968, pp.32-33). At an institutional and propositional level the Christianity of Denmark was very much alive, yet this Christianity was no longer experienced as that which called forth transformation in social relations and structures. Thus the behaviour and values reflected in the ecclesiastical institutions and the rest of society communicated that Christianity did not exist.

In view of this, SK believed that the centrality of the imitation of Christ in medieval Christian life made that age a more advanced one in a religious sense. It was more advanced in that it conceived of Christianity as a commitment 'to action, life, the transformation of personal existence', while it also recognised that religious commitment to the transformation of one's life sets one in an unalterable opposition to the world as one finds it (FSE/JFY, 1967, p.201).

Yet, despite this, SK was also critical of the medieval idea that 'existential transformation' demands 'a denial of temporality, finitude and bodiness' and a commitment to a spiritual ideal that is essentially divorced from the material (Elrod, 1981, p.201). For SK the truth takes hold of the individual and brings about a transformation, rather than a denial, of the material dimensions of the self and the society which surrounds it. Thus he rejects the notion that the monastic and ascetic life provides the best means to this transformation, but nevertheless accepts that to be possessed by the truth is to understand the demands of religion as absolute and to bring the individual into conflict with the demands and obligations of the socio-economic structures that engage the self (pap.x 1 A 132 [JP693]).

Thus the communication of the gospel requires that 'the Witness to the truth' embodies that which is communicated, for the individual does not possess the truth, but is rather to be possessed by the truth. Religious truth is that which can only be known when it engages the existence of the individual, for truth is always more than what the individual possess in himself or herself. It is not something that is outside of the individual that is able to be received in the same way as any other form of information. On the contrary, the nature of truth is such that it must take hold of the individual<sup>10</sup>.

SK, therefore, argues that the existential nature of the gospel can only be communicated existentially. It is when the individual begins to live in a way that is distinctively different and reflects a set of values completely in opposition to those that dominate the socio-political order that Christianity is truly communicated. That is to say, the ethical imperative of the gospel is brought to bear on the life of society through the actions of others. As SK stresses, 'If Christianity is to be reintroduced into Christendom, it must again be proclaimed unconditionally as imitation, as law...' (pap.x 5 A 42 [JP401]). Then the disciple will be 'construed in accordance with the paradigm - not as in established Christianity' (TC, 1968, p.110).

## authority

However, this brings us to the question of authority. The nature of Christian truth necessitates that the gospel be communicated in such a way that it impinges on the life of those to whom it is addressed. Yet this requires that one acts with authority.

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<sup>10</sup> SK's contempt for proofs relating to the existence of God come out of this same fundamental philosophy, for to engage in such an exercise is to deny the very existence of God.

Two factors are involved in this. Firstly, if one is to speak with authority it requires that one engages the individual's or institution's existence in such a way that it demands a response. The difficulty lies not in the mere 'objective communication' of the self-revelation of God in Christ and its dogmatic implications and description, but in making effective the ethical imperative Christ creates for the existence of the individual and the structures of society. The communication of Christianity must come with the divine 'thou shalt' (pap.x 1 A 188 [JP186]).

However, such authority comes only from relating oneself to the eternal, the absolute. And this is the second element in communicating with authority:

Authority does not mean to be a king or to be an emperor or general, to have the power of arms, to be a bishop, or to be a policeman [This is the conception of immanent authority, not the paradoxical conception of authority], but it means by a firm and conscious resolution to be willing to sacrifice everything, one's very life, for his cause; it means to articulate a cause in such a way that a person is at one with himself (pap.viii A 416 [JP183]).

This again brings us back to the thought of the imitation of Christ. What SK is suggesting is that only those that embody in their own lives a relationship to the eternal reality of God, expressed in the way they act, are able to communicate Christianity with any type of authority. As he notes, 'The reason the Pharisees spoke without authority, although they were indeed authorised teachers, was precisely that their talk, like their lives, was in the power of seventeen finite concerns' (pap.viii A 416 [JP183]).

Authority, therefore, is self-authenticating. It is derived from God. Yet this authorisation does not take an institutional or propositional form. It is inherent within the individual as he or she expresses his or her relationship to God in the way that he or she lives. Unlike Christendom this type of authority does not seek to justify itself or be established through speculative reasoning or the employing of political power (pap.x 2 A 119 [JP187]). It stands purely on the basis of the witness of the individual's life. Therefore SK concludes 'Christianity is an existence-communication [Existens-Meddelelse] brought into the world by the use of authority' (pap.x 2 A 119 [JP187]).

This self-authenticating of the proclamation of Christianity was fundamental for SK. In a secular society in which the traditional values and sources of authority had been undermined and rejected, it was essential that if any ethical imperative was to be introduced it had to be self-authenticating. The power with which the individual



communicated had to be born out of his or her existence. Therefore, the self-revelation of God in Christ would only come to bear on the life of society and the individual when it was embodied in the life of those that communicated it. Without this the power of Christianity to transform social relations would be severely hindered and eventually society would come to be controlled by a series of rationalistic philosophies.

In view of this, it is significant that SK spoke of his work as written by one 'without authority'<sup>11</sup>. It has been suggested that SK implied by this that he 'presents the truth of revelation only dialectically and resigns any attempt to prove it' (Diem, 1955, p.85). He develops what he sees as the truth only in dialectical manner. He discusses the pros and cons of it, and then leaves the reader to decide for himself. When SK refers to and argues from dogmatic assertions, he does not use them as principles from which the truth is to be inferred, but as presuppositions in a dialectic process, which recur later as conclusions (see CD, 1944, PF, 1938). This is not to say, however, that he leaves the truth 'of the revelational fact *in suspenso*', for he leaves the reader in no doubt that he assumes its implied authority over human existence. This is possibly one of the reasons for the edifying discourses that accompanied all the pseudonymous writings.

However, although there is a very valid point in relation to SK's methodology in this interpretation, it does not completely account for the description of SK as 'one without authority'. For in order to understand this one must consider SK's concept of authority as rooted in the existence of the individual. Therefore, in claiming to be 'without authority' SK is rejecting the way of vouching for the truth of Christianity by the power of his own existence, and so acquiring authority as a teacher. He is constantly assuring us that while he knows what Christianity is, he cannot consider himself a Christian and instead inquires of the reader whether he or she is one. Authority is seen to be rooted in individual existence, and SK feels that his existence before God is not sufficient for him to speak with authority.

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<sup>11</sup> 'Without authority, to draw attention to the phenomenon of religion and of Christianity - that is the description which applies to the whole of my literary activity, considered in its entirety. From the start I started with the utmost clarity and considered myself as the reader of my writings rather than as the author of them'. (pap.x 2 A 177 [JP6526]. See also pap.x 3 A 77, 261, 389 [JP6616, 6655, 6665]).

## ordination

What is also very significant is that this notion of authority is very closely related to SK's understanding of ordination. Despite a progression in SK's thinking, ordination is always seen to be related to the notion of religious authority. 'Authority is a specific quality; conferred upon the Apostle through his calling, conferred upon the clergyman through his ordination' (pap.xi 1 A 101 [JP3584]). Snowdon argues that SK's description of ordination identifies two sources of authority that are inter-related in the act of ordination; the 'official' and the 'existential'. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, SK suggests 'A priest is essentially what he is through ordination, and ordination is a teacher's paradoxical transformation in time by which he becomes, in time, something else than what is involved in the immanent development of genius, talents, and so forth' (CUP, 1941, p.486). Thus ordination is a sign that the individual has been arrested by the eternal, the divine, and so transformed.

Yet as Snowdon points out this inevitably leads to the conclusion, that 'the authority of the pastor comes not from ordination, but strictly from the pastor's call to be a witness to the truth and a corresponding mode of existence through which she or he reduplicates the pattern of the Christian faith' (Snowdon, 1985, p.50). As SK himself claims, 'when the ordained man's life is completely secularised he cannot personally plead that he is ordained' (pap.x 5 A 84 [JP4568]). Thus ordination becomes the public recognition of an individual's value commitments and life-style and grants on the basis of this an institutional authority to perform the public functions of the pastoral office and to proclaim the faith before others. Therefore, in speaking of himself as one 'without authority' SK was contrasting his own communication of Christianity with that of Christendom and its authorised teachers. He was acknowledging that there are other possible means of conveying the truth of Christianity, and that it was not through oblique dialectical communication but direct proclamation, claiming authority, that Christianity was introduced into the world.

Yet the question of ordination and authority brings us again back to the whole issue of the role of the clergy in social change discussed at the end of chapter three. We have seen that SK insists that if Christianity is to be communicated in a way that transforms society it must be communicated with authority. This authority is self-authenticating, rooted in the individual's existence, and invested in those who have been ordained to proclaim the faith to others. Yet the implication in this is that the clergy must be imitators of Christ in a way that others are not.

Thulstrup makes this same point in his discussion of SK's dialectic of imitation, pointing out that SK asked 'whether the demand for imitation is equally binding upon all men or merely upon a few' (Thulstrup, 1962, p.268). Thulstrup argues that SK answers this question in a 'Thomistic manner'. This stresses that the demand applies to all of humanity, but only those few who 'undertake freely are bound to it by a special degree' (Thulstrup, 1962, p.268). The requirement is for, all although it is only fulfilled by those that are Christians to an exceptional degree.

If we express this another way we can say that SK believed that the grace of God was the fundamental basis of Christian faith. Yet grace did not remove the ethical obligation that the self-revelation of God in Christ brought. Discipleship continued to be a fundamental requirement. However, the extent to which one's existence was related to Christ affected the extent to which you could communicate Christianity to others. If someone was to be authorised to proclaim the faith to others it required that his or her life demonstrated the reality of that faith. And so, SK comes to propose two categories of Christian: a) 'Witnesses to the truth' - that is those who have obtained within their own personal existence a level of following Christ that allows them to communicate Christianity with authority - b) 'Ordinary Christians' - that is those who have not yet struck out on the path toward Christian faith in its ideal sense. [We could also make mention of 'Apostles' as a third category. These are the men that stand as the definitive witness to Christianity next to Christ himself, because of their exceptional relationship to Christ] (Snowdon, 1985, p.49).

Therefore, obviously ordination and 'witnessing to the truth' are very closely related in SK's thought. The ordained ministry should be distinctive because only through such distinctiveness are they truly able to communicate the Gospel of Christ with authority. It is also interesting to see that in suggesting this SK is redefining the clergy-laity divide in terms of life-style, rather than office. The thing that should separate the clergy from the rest of the community is the values that are expressed in the way they live. Yet it is important to see that in this, SK is not proposing a notion of priesthood like that found in Roman Catholicism, although his appeals for celibacy at the end of the *Attack* may suggest this (AUC, 1968, p.234). The reason this is not the case is because the potential to be 'a witness to the truth' is latent within every Christian. For the ordained ministers exist not as mediators, but as examples.

The task of making the claims of Christ pertinent to the life of society and the individual, therefore, falls on the clergy in a very distinctive way. If Christianity is to be communicated with authority in a secular age, and 'true Christianity can only be proclaimed with authority', it requires 'Witnesses to the Truth'; That is those who in their own personal existence authenticate the message. They must exist in such a relationship to society that they are seen to challenge, in what they represent, the dominant socio-political and socio-economic forces at work. The ordained ministry, therefore, represents an ethico-religious tradition in the life of society that values the individual in his or her own right, seeing the individual as a separate being of value independent of one's self-interest. For the truth of the gospel is such that it can only be communicated when it is seen as an existential, and not just a propositional, reality.

## 4.4 clerical occupational identity and the gospel

In view of this, SK proposes that the message of the Christian gospel cannot be communicated in a secular society unless it is acted out. It is the behaviour and values communicated in the life-style that is adopted by the clergy and those that are part of the ecclesiastical institution that are fundamental to communicating Christian truth<sup>12</sup>. He insists one cannot ignore the values that govern the lives of those that communicate Christianity to others, especially in terms of their occupational identity. In fact, SK goes as far as to suggest that in a secular society the message of Christianity is only as effective as the values reflected in the lives of those who communicate it. As he vividly illustrates:

Imagine that a society was formed for the purpose of counteracting the drinking of wine. To that end the director of the society thought it expedient to engage a number of men who as emissaries, speakers, call them "priests" could travel through the whole land, working to win men and persuade them to join the society. "But" said the director at the meeting when the thing was decided, "to economise on priests doesn't do a damn bit of good, to require them not to drink wine leads to nothing....He must have his bottle of wine every day, and in proportion to his zeal something extra,...[so] he will carry people away, so that they will enter our society in countless numbers (AUC, 1968, p.102)

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<sup>12</sup> Yet obviously SK is not suggesting that action alone embodies the message of Christianity or even that there is no other way in which Christian truth may be conveyed. His own dialectic method, 'without authority', is an instance of another form.

Obviously this conclusion had implications for the occupational identity and commitments of the Danish clergy. SK insisted that as long as the social identity and behaviour of the ordained ministry expresses the same basic values as the dominant socio-cultural order of things, then the power of the gospel to effect social change is suppressed. The communication of the gospel requires a distinction be seen in the values that are reflected in the lives of those who bring it to others. Yet in Denmark the occupational identity of the clergy was like that of any other profession, operating and functioning as other professional bodies. 'The Protestant clergy...have become in their "existence" entirely like men of every other class, who, without exceeding the limits prescribed by civil law, seek to develop what gifts they may have, and thereby strive to attain earthly rewards and pleasure like all the rest...' (AUC, 1968, p.12)<sup>13</sup>.

In the *Attack* the effect that the occupational identity of the clergy has on the communication of the gospel is seen very clearly in SK's comments on the royal commission. SK argues that 'Christianly considered, this is decisive for the whole ecclesiastical establishment' for in itself it communicates something about the nature of Christianity in Denmark (AUC, 1968, p.44). The fact that the clergy identify themselves with the government civil service distorts the message of Christianity and causes people to perceive the gospel of Christ as a legitimisation of the State. It gives rise to a completely erroneous idea of what Christianity is, so much so that the State becomes the protector of God himself (AUC, 1968, pp.102-104). Thus a completely distorted picture of who God is results from the failure of the clergy in their occupational identity and commitments to portray the true nature of Christianity.

SK, therefore, stresses that the context in which the message of Christianity is preached, and by whom, has considerable bearing on how what is said is understood. That is to say, 'to appeal to one's royal commission is really to inform upon oneself as one who is unfaithful to the kingdom which would not at any price be a kingdom of this world' (AUC, 1968, p.44). For SK the occupational identity of the clergy was as much part of what was communicated about Christianity, consciously or unconsciously, as the message itself. The values reflected in the behaviour and commitments of the clerical profession defined the parameters of how Christianity was perceived. Thus the context out of which the clergy spoke affected what was heard.

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<sup>13</sup> SK stresses, 'The very existence of these priests is an untruth. Being completely secularised and in the service of the State [royal functionaries, persons of social position making a career]...' (AUC, 1969, p.97; See also p19, 82-86).

SK's contention in the *Attack* was that the claim by the clergy to be 'Witnesses to the truth', while at the same time reflecting a secular set of values, negated the Christian gospel. As SK insists the claim to 'witness to the truth' while 'enjoying all worldly goods and advantages by the preaching of Christianity...corresponds to a virgin with her numerous flock of children' (AUC, 1968, p.17). 'When the ordinary preaching of Christianity here in this land, the official preaching of Christianity, performed by royal functionaries, men of consequence, whose preaching is their worldly career - when this preaching of Christianity is put alongside of the New Testament, alongside of what Jesus Christ [the poor, humiliated man, mocked and spat upon] requires of "a disciple of Jesus Christ" [and such surely the priest should be, if he is to be accounted a witness to the truth]' then it immediately becomes apparent what an 'impudent indecency' it is to describe this as 'a Witness to the truth' (AUC, 1968, p.17). Yet to do so identifies the values reflected in the occupational identity of the clergy with those of Christianity. This creates what SK calls the 'illusion of Christendom'.

The 'illusion of Christendom', according to SK, is a function of the social matrix. 'We have a complete crew of bishops, deans, and priests; learned men, eminently learned, talented gifted, humanly well-meaning...but not one of them is in character of the Christianity of the New Testament. But if such is the case, the existence of this Christian crew is so far from being, Christianly considered advantages to Christianity that it is far rather a peril, because it is infinitely likely to give rise to a false impression...' (AUC, 1968, p.29). Yet the occupational identity of the clergy is at the heart of this illusion, for what the clergy are communicates what Christianity is. If what the clergy represented is understood to be a genuine 'witness to the truth', then Christianity becomes something completely different from what it truly is. The 'militant nature' of the gospel is lost and Christianity becomes purely a function of the socio-political order.

However, the occupational identity of the clergy is seen to do more than just limit the message of Christianity. It hinders any attempt to break the illusion that it creates. SK argues the vested interests of the clergy prohibit any admission in regard to what they embody. Such interests do not allow for the occupational identity of the clergy to be addressed or reviewed in order to reflect a different set of values. Thus he suggests:

Suppose that the State employed 1000 officials who with their families lived by opposing and hindering Christianity, and so were pecuniarily interested in doing it - that would be an attempt in the direction of making Christianity impossible.

And yet this attempt [which after all has the advantage of openness, that it openly proposed to hinder Christianity] would not be nearly so dangerous



as what actually occurs, that the State employs 1000 officials who, under the name of preaching Christianity [here precisely lies the great danger, in comparison with wishing quite openly to hinder Christianity] are pecuniarily interested in having men...not learn to know what Christianity truly is (AUC, 1968, p.83).

SK, therefore, identifies three ways in which the occupational identity of the clergy in Denmark is decisive for the communication of the gospel. First, as we saw at the end of chapter three, SK suggests that as the clergy derive social esteem and influence, as well as economic security, from the existing socio-political order they are reluctant to call it and its values into question. The occupational identity and commitments of the clergy fosters a conservative perspective that is not conducive to the militant nature of the gospel. Yet this is made even worse by the second element which is the fact that such an occupational identity portrays Christianity in such a way that it is seen to affirm the basic bourgeoisie values that govern society. Thus Christianity comes not only to defend and provide a legitimisation of the socio-political order, it actually promotes it. The very nature of the Christian message itself is interpreted and understood in relation to the professional values of the clergy themselves, who 'witness to the truth'.

SK, therefore, argues that the professional self-interest of the clergy make the identification of Christianity with liberal bourgeoisie values highly desirable. However, this creates a reluctance to portray, even indirectly, the truth in relation to the militant nature of the Christian message, while Christianity becomes an ideological tool that protects vested self-interests and is completely impotent as a force for social change.

The *Attack* assumes that as the clergy reflected a religion that was purely propositional in nature, they had come to embody and endorse the dominant socio-cultural values of the time. Thus because of the values that had been adopted by the clergy the 'militant nature' of the gospel had been suppressed. Yet this also implied that what was communicated as Christianity was a complete distortion of the gospel of Christ and had turned the Christian message into an ideological tool for the use of self-interested parties. Thus for SK the values embodied in the occupational identity of the clergy are an essential factor in what is communicated in regards to the nature of Christianity.

### **clerical integrity**

However, SK's thought in this area is not as straight forward as it first appears. We must again take account of the dialectic relationship he proposes between law and grace and the alienated nature of social relations.

SK assumes that the clergy are always going to be implicated in the socio-cultural and political context in which they exist. As we saw in exploring SK's notion of truth, the truth engages the individual in the context in which he or she lives. It calls for a response in the midst of the compromised social relationships in which the existence of the individual is rooted. It does not lift the individual out of society or even resolve the moral ambiguities. Thus the occupational identity of the clergy is always conditioned and compromised by the society in which they exist. The response of the 'Witness to the truth' is always partial. There is always a degree of ambivalence in the values that are reflected.

This again raised the question for SK as to how, despite this ambivalence in the occupational identity of the clergy, is a genuine Christian witness to be established in society? He proposes two solutions to this problem. The first one dominated his work for most of his life and focused on the concept of professional integrity. The second one, was only given an explicit form in the last few months of his life and returned to the theme of the imitation of Christ.

SK maintained for most of his literary career that if an 'admission' was made by the Danish establishment as to the vested interests of the clergy and the compromised nature of what they represented this would restore a Christian witness in Denmark. The rationale behind this was that through admitting what one was not one indirectly pointed to the truth. For in declaring that one's life and witness is in tension with the true nature of Christianity, one draws attention to what Christianity truly is.

Thus SK saw this type of rationale as a way of providing a defence for the Establishment. He insisted that this solution was the only possible way of providing a defence for the compromised nature of clerical identity and Danish Christianity. SK employed his understanding of grace to allow for the fact that in a fallen world the representation of the self-revelation of God in Christ will always be partial in nature. Yet because of this, he believed it is essential that those who represent Christ to others willingly admit the way in which they are implicated in the alienated structures of society and recognise their own vested interests. Without this SK was convinced that Christianity simply becomes a way of legitimising a particular socio-political order or a set of secular and liberal values that completely distort the radical nature of the Christian gospel.

We, therefore, find that SK's basic concern in the initial articles in the *Fatherland* was to call for a professional integrity on the part of the clergy. In one article entitled, 'What Do I Want?', he writes:

Quite simply: I want honesty....I believe that, if possibly even the very extremist softening down of Christianity may hold good in the judgement of eternity, it is impossible that it should hold good when artful tricks are employed to gloss over the difference between the Christianity of the New Testament and this softened form. What I mean is this: If a man is known for his graciousness-very well then, let me venture to ask him to forgive me all my debt; but even though his grace were divine grace, this is too much to ask, if I will not even be truthful about how great this debt is.

And this in my opinion is the falsification of which official Christianity is guilty: it does not frankly and unreservedly make known the Christian requirement-perhaps because it is afraid people would shudder to see at what distance from it we are living, without being able to claim that in the remotest way our life might be called an effort in the direction of fulfilling the requirement (AUC, 1968, p.38).

What this approach is suggesting is that one accepts the inevitability that the occupational identity of the clergy will be influenced by the dominant socio-cultural values of the society in which they exist. Inevitably this will mean that the clergy, despite what they may say, will embrace and even legitimise values that have evolved from the alienated structures of society. That is to say, the clergy will function as any other professional body, protecting their own social position and influence and economic well-being.

The only way in which the professional identity of the clergy will not compromise the gospel and the power of Christianity to shape social relations and structures, is if ministerial integrity exists. The gospel as a militant force will only be safe-guarded if the clergy themselves are willing to be confronted by the self-revelation of God in Christ and admit their own failures and interests. An ecclesiastical integrity, therefore, that admits and recognises the vested interests of the clergy as a professional body and the secular values that they embody, maintains a true and credible Christian witness in society.

However, SK found this approach to the problem of clerical occupational identity and Christian witness did have difficulties. The most significant of these was that such an integrity jeopardised the professional self-interests of the clergy. Although to admit to the compromised nature of one's life-style and the professional self-interests of the ecclesiastical establishment protects the militant nature of the gospel, it also calls into question such self-interests. In fact, such integrity may have the effect that people find

the professional self-interests of the clergy completely unacceptable and demand change. And so, despite the fact that SK believed that this was the only defence that could be made for the establishment and ensure the existing ecclesiastical order, he also became more and more aware that it may be counter productive.

SK, therefore, came to insist that only if a genuine attempt is made in the direction of the 'imitation of Christ' could one speak of a 'witness to the truth'. One had to be seen to be struggling with the dominant socio-political and socio-cultural values and attempting to reflect in ecclesiastical structures a distinctive set of values. Thus the occupational identity of clergy should be distinctive from other professional bodies. The clergy should follow a pattern within their occupational commitments that challenges and regulates the self-interested and egotistic structure of social relations. Only if the clergy come to act as the representatives of this type of ethico-religious tradition will they be able to bring the ethical imperative of the gospel to bear, and so challenge and call forth change in the life of the individual and society. It is in this sense that SK calls for 'Witnesses to the truth'.

## Conclusion

SK believed the failure of the Danish clergy to provide an effective Christian witness was rooted in a deficient Christology - a Christology that was deficient in three ways: Firstly, it failed to recognise in the light of the self-revelation of God in Christ the alienated nature of social relations and structures. Secondly, it denied the militant nature of Christ in relation to society. Instead of recognising that the gospel of Christ stands over and even against the basic values and ideals that shape society, they identified Christ with these. Thirdly, and possibly most importantly of all, they did not appreciate that Christ makes ethical claims on the individual's existence. They failed to acknowledge that the individual's relationship to Christ necessitates one follows him and this inevitably leads to a conflict with the socio-political and socio-cultural values of an alienated society.

Yet SK believed the nature of Christianity and Christian witness should not exist as an ideological tool by which to ensure the existing socio-political order. Rather he stressed the ordained ministry should represent in the life of society a set of ethico-religious values which challenge and call into question the dominant socio-political values of the time and bring the ethical imperative of the gospel to bear on the self-interested and egotistical structures of social relations. Thus SK insisted that if an effective Christian witness was to be established it required that the value commitments and occupational identity of the ordained ministry be addressed, the ordained ministry making the ethical imperative of the gospel a reality in two very distinctive ways: firstly, through challenging the self-interested and egotistic nature of social relations and structures in society, standing in opposition to the basic forces of alienation and oppression within the social matrix; and secondly, through a pattern of behaviour which seeks an essential movement away from self toward the other. Yet this is to be accomplished not through political or social polemic, but through specific actions which seek to demonstrate the human worth and significance of the individual and the possibility of restoring 'the stranger to the community' through the breaking down of elitist and oppressive barriers. It is in the light of this understanding of the ordained ministry that I want to go on and look at the question of clerical professionalisation and its significance.

**Part three**

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# **The Clerical Profession**

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## Chapter Five

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# The professions, society and ministry

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I have argued in the previous chapters that a thrust of the *Attack upon Christendom* is the compromised nature of Danish clerical identity and witness. SK claims that with the clergy's embracing of secular values, the power to communicate the Christian gospel is lost and the ability of the church to act as a catalyst for social change is threatened. Turning now from SK's writings, I wish to look at these ideas in the context of the modern debate concerning clerical professionalisation.

In this chapter, I propose to look at the way that the process of professionalisation has been defined, and how this effects the description of the ordained ministry as a profession. In the following chapter, I will then go on and look at the way this process is seen to have shaped and influenced clerical occupational identity and some responses to clerical professionalisation, before examining how this relates to SK.

### SK and professionalism

One of the principal contentions of SK's thought was that the Danish clergy reflected and embodied the dominant values of what he called a 'secular' society (see pap.ix A 424 [2217], pap.x II A 364, 558 [2511, 2513], pap.xi I A 37 [2563]). He came to this conclusion in a context in which the Church and its clergy were still at the centre of social and political life, although institutional forms of religion were beginning to wane [see Chapter one]. Today, on the other hand, the Christian religion is much more marginalised and our understanding of secular values is very different from that found in SK. Yet the life of the Christian Church continues to be influenced and shaped by the cultural and social forces at work around it.

One of the most significant of these influences has been that of professionalism. The increase in the number of professional occupational bodies has been recognised as one of the principal characteristics of modern urban, industrial and secular society (Moore, 1970). As William Goode insists, 'An industrialising society is a professionalising society' (Goode, 1960, p.902). Yet this increase reflects much more than simply changing occupational roles, it points to and is symptomatic of a shift in values and social structures that characterise the changing nature of society (Jensen & Mooney, 1990).

The clergy have not been exempt from these social changes. As recent studies have shown, professionalism has significantly shaped the development and identity of the ordained ministry (Glasse, 1964; Russell, 1980; D. Campbell, 1982; A. Campbell, 1985). It has influenced the way in which the ordained ministry functions, is seen, and what it requires of those who seek admission to its ranks (Campbell, 1985, p.26).

These studies provide a point of contact with SK, for there is a common concern with the relationship of clerical identity and social structure. Although the way in which the question is approached is very different, both explore how secular values embodied in the process of professionalisation have influenced and shaped the development of the ordained ministry. Moreover, there is considerable affinity between SK's portrayal of the Danish clergy, as a pecuniary self-interested occupational body, seeking social position and power through ideological means, and certain contemporary views of professionalism (McKinlay, 1973). However, before we are able to go on and explore this relationship, it is necessary to define and develop an understanding of professionalism itself.

## **5.1 professions in sociological perspective.**

Sociologists have been concerned with the question of work since the beginning of the discipline's history<sup>1</sup>. With the growth in the number of professionals and occupations claiming professional status there has been an active interest in trying to identify the social dynamics involved in professional occupations. Yet this has proved highly problematic.

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<sup>1</sup> The influence of Karl Marx on the discipline in this regard is significant (see Johnson, 1972, p.11).

## the problem of definition

One of the reasons for the problematic nature of definition has been the way the terms themselves are widely and imprecisely applied in every day language. For instance, the word 'professional' is used with a number of different meanings which range from the opposite of amateur to the description of a job or service carried out proficiently. Some sociologists, therefore, have argued that it is impossible to define the notion of professionalism in a way that is appropriate to sociological analysis because the notion lacks 'a distinct referent' (Cogan, 1955). Habenstein suggests that the term itself exists only as a status claim and has no definite or consistent definition. It is the connotations of social status and recognition associated with a profession, rather than any type of denotation, which is important in giving the term its social significance. Thus the word 'profession' is used as a symbolic label for a desired status and is of little use to sociology because it lacks 'terminological clarification' (Habenstein, 1963). However, this approach fails to appreciate that even accepting this, the term 'profession' is still of interest to the sociologist who wants to identify the social dynamics involved in an occupational group beginning to describe itself in terms of this symbolic label.

Yet this highlights another difficulty. The description of an occupational body as a 'profession' immediately attributes it with a certain degree of social standing and recognition. This means that there are a number of vested-interests in the way that a profession is defined. Cogan, in his essay 'The Problem of Defining a Profession', maintains this in part accounts for the lack of uniformity in definitions. He argues definitions are governed by the purpose that the author has in giving the definition and suggests three types 'persuasive definitions, designed to argue the case for a particular occupation; 'operational definitions', used to facilitate decisions about the organisations and practice of an occupation; and 'logistic definitions', which were descriptive attempts to draw verbal boundaries around historical material and customary usage' (Cogan, 1955, p.109).

The absence of a distinct referent is also noted by Millerson. The historical development of the professions is such that the social reality that is defined by the term 'profession' is constantly changing. Professionalism is not 'a static phenomenon', but rather 'a dynamic process' (Millerson, 1964, p.5). In view of this, the definition of professionalism has proved problematic for there is no fundamental agreement as to the empirical reality that the term describes and the social phenomenon itself may be seen

to be is subject to change. A number of approaches, therefore, has been suggested to the question of definition.

## **understanding the professions**

The first significant discussion of the professions was found in the writings of Durkheim. Durkheim's work was principally concerned with the idea of the professions as occupational associations that provided ethical values in the life of society (Durkheim, 1957). Durkheim suggests that the State as a social phenomenon is too complex and vast to engage and exert an integrating and regulating influence on the life of the individual. Thus 'a nation can be maintained only if, between the State and the individual, there is intercalated a whole series of secondary groups near enough to the individuals to attract them strongly in to their sphere of action and drag them, in this way, into the general torrent of social life' (Durkheim, 1933, p.28). The professional association, therefore, exists as a group within society that channels human egotism and ensures the individual works for some positive and socially constructive end.

Carr-Saunders and Wilson further developed this understanding of the professions as a distinctive form of association (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933). However, they emphasised that professional association evolved in the life of society as a response to the process of industrialisation. Such associations, therefore, are defined by a distinctive type of specialized skill and technical knowledge that brought professional practitioners together in 'recognition of common interests' (Carr-Saunders, 1966, p.5). These associations provide a basis for the development of professional skills and their social utility, through ensuring a minimum level of competence and codes of conduct. Thus professional associations are distinguished by the degree to which 'they seek to establish minimum qualifications for entrance..., to enforce appropriate rules and norms of conduct..., and to raise the status of the professional group in the larger society' (Carr-Saunders, 1966, pp.2-3).

Parsons also saw the professions as evolving out of 'the development and application of science and learning' in modern society (Parsons, 1937, p.34). He depicted the professions as characterised by 'rationality', 'universalism' and 'functional specificity'. The professions, for Parsons, applied a scientific methodology to the problems and needs of modern society. Yet what is significant in Parsons' study is that he attempted to empirically identify and isolate a series of characteristics that denote the nature of

the professions. This significantly contributed to the rise in the first of two very distinctive phases in the sociological interpretation of the professions.

### 1] definitions in terms of 'traits'

In this first phase, which left behind the earlier analysis of Durkheim that attempted to understand professionalism in its wider social context, sociologists concentrated on identifying the principal attributes of the professions. (see Johnson, 1972, pp.9-18; Hall, 1992, pp.42-45). This approach was based on the assumption that there is some essential quality or qualities which distinguish the professions from other occupations and provides a basis for a distinct body of theory on the professions.

One of the earliest and influential attempts to set forth a systematic criterion for identifying the professions was by Ernest Greenwood in 1957 (Greenwood, 1966). He suggested five basic criteria by which to identify a profession: 1) a systematic body of theory 2) professional authority based on that theory 3) community sanction 4) regulative code of ethics 5) professional culture. These characteristics provide a model of professionalism by which all other occupations may be measured and their degree of professionalisation determined.

Wilensky shortened this list to three fundamental essential 'traits': 1) a cognitive base 2) a service ideal 3) autonomy (Wilensky, 1963). He emphasised that, 'loose criteria (things like licensing and tenure arrangements) are less essential for understanding professional organisation than the traditional model of professionalism which emphasizes autonomous expertise and the service ideal' (Wilensky, 1963, p.137). However, Moore suggests six traits: 1) the existence of a full time paid occupation 2) the existence of a sense of vocation which implies 'the treatment of the occupation and all its requirements as an enduring set of normative and behavioural expectations' 3) a formalised occupational organisation 4) specialised education based on the acquisition of useful knowledge and skill 5) a service orientation 6) personal and collective organisation 'restrained by responsibility' (Moore, 1970; see appendix 4). He emphasises that the issue is not whether a particular occupational group *is or is not* a profession, reflecting all of the above characteristics, but whether the group is *more or less* a profession. Professionalisation is a continuum which relates to all occupational groups.

This approach to the study of the professions was seen to have a number of advantages not least that it appeared methodologically tenable, 'if adequate operational specifications are available for reliable identification of the selected characteristics' (Moore, 1970, p.13). It was claimed that it provided an effective model of professionalisation with which to compare and evaluate empirical observation. Yet in accepting that the emphasis of professional bodies may differ in relation to these traits, it gave enough flexibility to accommodate the different degrees of professionalism found within the various occupational groups. It also allowed for a very clear distinction to be drawn between the professions and other forms of work .

However, a number of difficulties were also seen to exist. The assumption that there was somewhere a true profession, an archetypal, ideal type accepted by all students and commentators as exuding the very esse of professionalism and, that from this, the key professional traits can be deduced with general agreement was seen to be increasingly questionable. Millerson, for instance, reviewed the work of twenty-one authors and identified twenty-three essential attributes, yet no single attribute was accepted by all twenty-one authors even though certain attributes were mentioned again and again (Millerson, 1964).

Similarly, this approach was accused of being too accepting of the professions' own descriptions of themselves. 'Too often statements of the aspirant group are taken at their face value and assertions of the existence of an ethical code, or systematic theory, or a need for lengthy training are accepted by commentators without investigation or analysis' (Wilding, 1982, p.3). It was maintained that the assertion as to the necessity of particular attributes is taken as proof of their existence, rather than as a claim of interested parties requiring verification. As McKinlay notes, students of the professions 'have uncritically accepted the claims and assumptions of the subjects of their study, to an extent which would be unforgivable in most other areas of sociological enquiry' (McKinlay, 1973, p). No consideration is given to the purpose that such claim may serve in the process of occupational self-assertion.

Possibly most significantly of all, it was accused of studying the professions in a social vacuum. As Wilding writes, 'The professions have been studied as if they existed in a vacuum. What most writers have done is to make the seemingly common-sense but limiting assumption that there must be certain characteristics which distinguish professional work from other work and it is these characteristics which make certain occupations into professions. It is an assumption with which the professions



themselves are unlikely to quarrel...', yet it fails to see the professions in the wider context of the development of social structures (Wilding, 1982, p.2).

## 2] definitions in terms of 'power'

The consequences of this was that a discernible shift began to take place in the study and definition of the professions in the 1970's. Instead of understanding the process of professionalisation in terms of an ideal-type, it increasingly came to be seen as a process used by individuals and groups as a means of advancing their interests. This is epitomised in Roth's attack on Greenwood's list of professional traits (Roth, 1972). He argued that the knowledge and skill of a profession often serves the faculty of professional or graduate schools more than it serves the client. Similarly, codes of ethics are portrayed as devices for curbing competition within the profession, rather than for ensuring that all clients receive equal service. Moreover, he claimed that no necessary relationship can be found between advanced knowledge and the quality of the service that is given. Therefore, the conclusion Roth reaches is that professional association and work requires to be understood in the light of occupational self-interest.

Sociologists who take this view study the professions in terms of how occupational bodies obtain power and maintain it in the face of threats from 'other occupational groups, the government, and employing organisations' (Hall, 1992, p.44). For instance, Abbott insists the key to understanding the professions is to notice that they constantly struggle with other occupations and their clients over the 'ground' they occupy (Abbott, 1988, p.8). They struggle to gain and maintain the exclusive right to do a particular type of work, in a particular way.

The work of Eliot Freidson, and in particular his study of the Profession of Medicine in 1970, made a significant contribution to this shift in the understanding of the professions (Freidson, 1970). He argued that professional status is based on power rather than on the possession of some set of attributes. Using the medical profession as an example, he demonstrated the way in which the physician completely controls the terms of his or her work and the work of others through various professional control mechanisms. Following Freidson, a number of other studies began to appear that highlighted the way in which doctors completely dominate the health care industry, even in the face of aggressive attempts by other professions to gain power (Berlant, 1975; Larkin, 1983).

However, this analysis was not only limited to the medical profession and a number of other works began to appear that illustrated the way in which the profession used specific claims to expertise and altruistic service to serve their own self-interests. Larson's historical study of *The Rise of Professionalism* which portrayed the professions, as we have already seen, as part of the 'structured inequality' in a capitalist society was significant in the way that it completely negates the idea that the professions function in a way that is distinctive from other forms of business (Larson, 1977). The professions are simply self-interested occupational associations that organise themselves in order to ensure the control of a market. In the same way, McKinlay demonstrated the way in which professional bodies may be seen to control social change in order to serve their own interests, and Wilding in *Professional Power and Social Welfare* illustrated how the professions ensure and use power in the shaping of social policy (McKinlay, 1973; Wilding, 1982). This understanding of the professions has continued to shape sociological understanding of the profession with Freidson developing his ideas further in the book, *Professional Power*, and with Abbott and Hall among others continuing to examine aspects of the development and maintenance of occupational power and autonomy (Freidson, 1986; Abbott, 1988; Hall, 1992).

Thus a number of considerations come out of these various sociological perspectives on the professions. The most important of these is that the professions cannot be understood in isolation from the social structures around them. If one sees the professions as part of the structural inequalities of a capitalist society, then it is highly probable that one would view the altruistic orientation as part of an expression of occupational self-interest (Larson, 1977). In the same way, if one views the professions as providing a moral force against the negative influences of human egotism in social structures, then one would probably argue that such altruism is a genuine and guiding principle reflected in all professional encounters (Durkheim, 1957). Thus the role that the professions are seen to play in the social matrix very much affects interpretation. This leads us to look at the different ways in which the significance of the professions has been interpreted in relation to the life of society. Only in view of this are we able to come to some type of understanding and definition of the professions. I propose to begin this by looking at the various historical interpretations of the professions.

## 5.2 professions in historical perspective

Historical studies of the professions have invariably seen the economic, industrial and social changes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the key factors in the emergence of the modern professions. It is maintained that although the professions existed in some form before this, they served a relatively unimportant role in the division of labour, despite holding a high position in the 'system of social stratification'. After the industrial revolution with the increasing importance of technical knowledge and specialisation, the professions became an integral part of the fabric of modern society and came to hold an essential role in the functioning of that society. Thus it is assumed 'professions are typical products of modern industrial society' (Larson, 1977, p.xvi).

### **'status' and 'occupation' based professionalism**

In view of this, it is stressed that 'the continuity of older professions with their "pre-industrial" past is...more apparent than real' (Larson, 1977, p.xvi). A dichotomy is maintained between the 'traditional' and the 'modern' and 'post-industrial' professions which emerged in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Prest, 1987, p.4): a distinction between what Elliott describes as 'status' and 'occupation' based professionalism (Elliott, 1972, pp.14-15).

This distinction is first developed in the work of Carr-Saunders and Wilson in their classic study *The professions* (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933). In this work, Carr-Saunders and Wilson give a brief account of the evolution of the traditional learned professions (clerical, legal, and medical) from within the medieval church and then document the rise of the 'new' professions (accountancy, engineering, nursing etc.) with their distinctive organisational form and 'cognitive rationality'. A sharp distinction is drawn between the form of the professions prior to the industrial revolution where they were regarded first and foremost as gentlemen's occupations and their subsequent evolution in the wake of the 'practical application of scientific knowledge, the growing complexity and scale of economic and social organisation, and the introduction of systematic methods of training and testing would-be entrants' (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933, pp.289ff.; Prest, 1987, p.2).

A similar interpretation is found in Sarfatti-Larson's *The rise of professionalism: a sociological analysis* (Larson, 1977). However, instead of interpreting professionalism in terms of social function, she sets her analysis in a broadly Marxist framework. She believes the process of professionalisation is a process of occupational self-assertion, struggle and conflict. The thrust of her thought is that 'the occupations that we call professions organised themselves to attain market power' in the wake of the industrial revolution. Thus she relates a series of successive stages of professional identity to the dominant mode of production (feudal, capitalist, monopoly capitalist). She writes:

I see professionalisation as the process by which producers of special services sought to constitute and control a market for their expertise. Because marketable expertise is a crucial element in the structure of modern inequality, professionalisation appears also as a collective assertion of special status and as a collective process of upward social mobility. In other words, the constitution of professional markets which began in the nineteenth century inaugurated a new form of structured inequality....founded on the achievement of socially recognised expertise, or, more simply, on a system of education and credentialing (Larson, 1977, p.xvi).

According to Larson, the advance of science and cognitive rationality, and 'the related rationalization and growing differentiation in the division of labour' allowed certain occupations to develop monopolies in particular areas of expertise. This special knowledge and skill in turn translated into social and economic rewards (Larson, 1977, pp.xvi-xvii). Thus her thought suggests, 'the professions can be regarded as the original achievement of certain aspiring occupational groups in mid-Victorian England who sought the highest form in which the middle class could pursue its primary goals of earning a good living, elevating both the moral and intellectual tone of society, and emulating the status of those above one on the social ladder' (quoted by Wilding, 1982, from Bledstein, 1976, p80).

This type of historical analysis is also applied by Russell in his account of the clerical profession in the Church of England. In his book, *The Clerical Profession* a very definite distinction is drawn between professionalism which is 'very much a Victorian creation, brought into being to serve the needs of an industrial society' and its earlier ecclesiastical forms that derived status from aristocratic association (Russell, 1980).

His work proposes three periods in the formation of the clerical profession in England. The earliest form of clerical professionalism finds its historical point of departure in Christendom. By means of the ecclesiastical court and the operation of the patronage system the clergy enjoyed a high level of autonomy for the performance of their role,

the tithe and freehold giving a legal independence and security unique among occupations of the time. However, the Church's relationship to the State was not always a fruitful one and by the beginning of the eighteenth century in England 'the clergy were subservient to the landed interest which had been so firmly re-established by the Glorious Revolution' (Russell, 1980, p29).

Throughout the eighteenth century this situation began to change quite dramatically in the wake of the Agrarian Revolution, the Enclosure Movement, and the steady rise in the price of grain. The new found prosperity of rural communities was reflected in the prosperity of the parish clergy who 'both individually and as an occupational group were experiencing a steady upward social mobility' (Russell, 1980, p.32). At the same time, the land gentry were finding that because of the land reforms and progressive inflation they had to find alternative sources of income. And so, it was to the non-manual occupational roles in society which were deemed suitable occupations for a gentlemen, such as government, military service, and the church, that many of them turned. Thus a significant change in social status and position of the clergy was brought about through the identification of the clerical profession with the land gentry.

A second period in the history of the clerical profession, therefore, is seen in which it became a learned and 'high-status occupational role' that carried the accepted status of being an 'occupational appendage' to the gentry. As Russell highlights, 'A clergyman of the last quarter of the eighteenth century could partake in the interests and recreation of the gentry to a degree that made it difficult for contemporaries to regard the clergy as a distinct body' (Russell, 1980, p.33). However, as the processes of social change transformed English society in the early decades of the nineteenth century another transition is seen.

With the dramatic social, economic, and political changes in society brought about by the Industrial Revolution, according to Russell, a new form of professionalism began to emerge based on the growth in scientific and technical knowledge. This form of professionalism presented a potential for the land gentry to maintain their position in the face of a radicalism which 'resented hereditary privilege, unrepresentative government, the political hegemony of the landed interest, and the whole prescriptive basis of traditional society', while at the same time giving a powerful vehicle for the social aspirations of the emerging middle classes. Thus the modern professions with their high social standing and influence, based on merit and not privilege, made them ideally suited to the needs for social mobility in Victorian society (Russell, 1980, pp.21-22).

However, in the wake of this new professionalism the ordained ministry had to seek 'their legitimisation and authority no longer primarily in terms of status but rather in terms of the social utility of their knowledge and skill' (Russell, 1980, p.24). This Russell argues brought about a number of very significant changes in the occupational identity of the clergy and has determined the form of the clerical profession as it is seen today. Thus Russell's contention is that the ordained ministry of the Church of England adopted a model of professionalism that developed independently in the wake of industrialisation and that the designation of the clergy as a profession has little to do with its historical antecedents and a great deal to do with professionalism as a 'Victorian creation'. Carr-Saunders and Wilson, Larson and Russell, therefore, all draw a distinction between pre-post industrial forms of the professions.

### **alternative interpretations**

However, this impression of the professions 'as mere genteel parasites, lacking any distinctive social identity and entirely dependent on the patronage of the landed elite' before the nineteenth century has more and more been called into question recently (Prest, 1987). The historian Geoffrey Holmes in his work, *Augustan England: profession, state and society, 1680 - 1730*, directly challenges the distinction that is drawn between 'status' and 'occupation' based professionalism (Holmes, 1979, 1982). He insists the evidence in later Stuart and early Hanoverian England is that during 'a period which saw a striking growth in England's influence, self-confidence and material well-being, there was one group of Englishmen, the members of the professions, whose range of activities permeated almost all walks of life - public, private and corporate' (Holmes, 1982, pp.x-xi). Prest, in the *Professions in Early Modern England*, supports Holmes position (Prest, 1987). He writes, 'The structural complexities of society generally and early modern society in particular can hardly be adequately represented by a simple dichotomy between rulers and ruled, or masses and elites. The early modern professions actually straddled several social strata, while their clients covered an even wider spectrum' (Prest, 1987, p.6).

These historians point out that most of the historical analysis of the professions is by sociologists who have a narrow working definition of professionalism that forces them to interpret historical facts in a particular way. If one defines a profession primarily as an occupation that possess a technical and scientific body of knowledge which has social utility, then it follows one must draw a sharp distinction between pre and post



industrial professionalism. Yet it is claimed this distinction is little more than 'a priori inference' which is not a true reflection on the historical facts (Prest, 1987, p.9).

### **professions and the guilds**

Alternative interpretations have been suggested. One such interpretation identifies the professions with medieval craft guilds. Following Durkheim who was the original advocate of this perspective, Freidson argues:

The contemporary professions might be regarded as an educated, middle-class variant of the occupational principle of organisation already represented by the working-class crafts, the difference between the two being that the claim for autonomy and self-control among the professions is usually based on formal "higher" education rather than on trade school or long apprenticeship in practising some manual skill said to require complex judgement (Freidson, 1973, p.22).

Looking at the history of the Industrial Revolution, Freidson suggests what took place reflects Max Weber's 'administrative principle'. Skilled work done by craftsman was broken down through technological innovation into a series of discrete, simple operations by unskilled workers, that when co-ordinated and reconstituted by management, was able to produce a similar and cheaper product. Thus the 'source of authority' for the organisation of work was removed from the skilled worker and came to be located in the administrator or manager - 'in the authority of the incumbents in formal offices in a hierarchy' (Freidson, 1973, p.20).

The professions evolved in direct conflict to this mechanisation and rationalisation of work. They represented a basis for the organisation of work that reflected 'the occupational principle' found in the pre-industrial guilds that allowed them to resist these forces of rationalisation. Therefore, we find that just as in the guilds, the work of the professions is formulated, controlled and evaluated by the workers. That is to say, the professions represent a form of organisational structure that pre-dates the Industrial Revolution (Freidson, 1973, p.22).

Nevertheless, it is difficult to establish any direct continuity between the guilds and the professions historically. It also should be noted that despite similarities between the two, there are noticeable differences in the organisational structures. In particular, the fact that the professions embody a national, as opposed to a local, occupational monopoly should be noted. Despite this, the 'occupational principle' that Freidson

identifies is clearly present within the professions, as well as the guilds, although there may be no direct historical link between the two.

### **ordained ministry and the 'anatomy' of the professions**

However, a very definite historical link is seen in another theory that has been forwarded. This suggests that the clergy provided the basic paradigm for the historical development of the professions. The historian Rosemary O'Day argues that the principal professions of law, medicine and university teaching did not find their origins in the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century, but were established long before this and were born out of Christendom (O'Day, 1987). These professions were originally clerical in nature.

Yet as they evolved away from their ecclesiastical origins, O'Day contends they did not lose their clerical nature, but continued to express a clerical form and identity. They continued to be modelled on the nature and values found within the ordained ministry, and it was this occupational model that was subsequently adopted and used by the various professions that emerged in the nineteenth century. Thus O'Day claims a direct continuity between the forms of professionalism expressed in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries may be seen that is rooted in the ordained ministry as a basic model of professionalism. As Ernest Greenwood observes of the professional:

The work life invades the after-work life, and the sharp demarcation between the work hours and the leisure hours disappears. To the professional person his work becomes his life. Hence the act of embarking upon a career is similar in some respects to entering a religious order. The same cannot be said of a non-professional occupation (Greenwood, 1966, p.17).

Hughes a number of years earlier had suggested a similar interpretation (Hughes, 1963). He noted the word 'profession' was originally used in early medieval Europe in relation to religious orders. 'To profess' was not only to make a profession of faith, but also to take upon oneself the vows of religious order (Hughes, 1963). In response to a Christian profession of faith, the 'professional' committed his or her life to service. It was out of this ecclesiastical context, that the professions first came, as law, medicine and education slowly evolved away from their ecclesiastical context.

Thus Hughes suggests the history of the professions represents a continuity of this religious tradition as various occupations developed and responded to the changing nature of society. This is evidenced in the fact that the role of the professional is

uniquely identified with a distinctive form of service to a client or group. In a professional context, the professional asks to be trusted by his or her clientele in a particular way and ideally he or she is granted this. Hughes insists the distinguishing characteristic of the history of the professions is that they represent an occupational form that embraces the principle *caveat emptor* of the ordained ministry rather than the *credat caveat* of business (Hughes, 1963, p.651).

Similarly, Dennis Campbell in *Doctors, Lawyers, Ministers: Christian Ethics in Professional Practice*, stresses the common characteristic throughout the history of the professions is the notion of vocation and the implicit relationship between the personal value commitments of the practitioner and the work undertaken (Campbell, 1982). The professional paradigm looks back and takes its point of departure from a religious frame of reference, and the history of the professions is a history of the way this religious paradigm has been translated into a secular society. Campbell claims the history of the professions cannot be understood except in relation to clericalism, for 'the tradition of ordained ministry as a profession results from the fact that it was ministry which gave rise to the classical understanding of a profession' (Campbell, 1983, p23).

The strength of this analysis is that it accounts for the historical evidence of the professions that pre dates the Industrial Revolution and is able to embrace the dramatic social and economic changes of the nineteenth century without having to propose a radical discontinuity (Prest, 1987, p.13). It also accounts for the reason that the ordained ministry continues to be a respected profession in a secular society, although the social utility of its knowledge is seriously in doubt. However, a considerable degree of caution is required in looking at these various interpretations of the professions for as Prest notes, 'we cannot expect to be handed ready-made theories which will satisfactorily explain the course of development followed by particular professional occupations from their first origins down to the present day' (Prest, 1987, p15).

Nevertheless, it would seem that the discontinuity theories of professionalism fail to adequately take account of the historical evidence relating to the professions before the nineteenth century. Moreover, most historical accounts of the professions do not provide a satisfactory explanation of the pervasive influence of the ecclesiastical and clerical values that are clearly implicit in professional practice. However, what is illustrated in these various historical accounts is that an understanding of the history of the professions is very much tied up with the sociological interpretation of the significance of the professions. It is to this that we now turn.

### **5.3 professions and their social significance**

If we set the various studies of professionalisation in the context of how the existence and nature of the professions is seen to be related to the structure of society, it is possible to argue that various patterns of interpretation emerge. In general, most analysis of the professions recognises the presence of three fundamental elements: altruistic ideals, knowledge, and autonomy or power (Bennett and Hokenstad, 1973). Taking these three elements as our starting point, I propose to look at different ways in which the social significance of the professions can be interpreted and these elements understood in relation to social structure.

#### **knowledge**

Carr-Saunders and Wilson use the Oxford Dictionary definition of a profession: 'A vocation in which a professed knowledge of some department of learning or science is used in its application to the affairs of others or in the practice of an art founded on it' (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933). This reflects one of the most dominant and influential interpretations of the professions and their significance. Such an interpretation suggests that the professions developed and came into existence to act as the custodians of the knowledge of society. 'Professional men', it is claimed, 'collectively possess the ability to perform all those skilled services upon which the continued functioning of modern society depends'. (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933, p.4). Thus the defining characteristic and significance of the professions is found in the type of knowledge and expertise which they are seen to possess.

Parsons very much developed this idea of the professions in his identification of professionalism with the systematic use and application of scientific knowledge. Parsons believed that as scientific forms of knowledge expand, so does an occupational methodology based on 'objective truth'. This rejects 'traditional judgements' seeking a more scientific basis which allows social needs to be effectively and efficiently met. This 'rationality' leads to occupational specialisation of which the professions are the definitive expression (Parsons, 1954, pp.36-38). Thus Parsons sees the professions as part of that social process by which the sum of the knowledge of a society is developed, interpreted, applied and handed on for the good of that society (Parsons, 1959, p.547).

In view of this, Parsons argues that the authority of the professions is based on their monopoly over certain areas of knowledge which have considerable practical application and social usefulness. The professional person is an acknowledged authority in an area of human knowledge which is socially important but of which most people are ignorant. In Parsons' words, they have a 'technical competence' which is characterised by a 'specificity of function' (Parsons, 1954, p.38). However, the professions also provide a regulating and controlling influence over the uses of this knowledge. Professional associations control training and professional standards, so ensuring technical competence, as well as providing a code of ethics which makes sure that the client's interests are not abused. The professionalisation of certain occupational roles is a process by which, for society's benefit, these roles become hedged about by a complex arrangement of norms, codes, laws, expectations, and sanctions. as the areas of knowledge over which the professions preside are of particular sensitivity in which any abuse or exploitation would result in great harm either to an individual or to a society.

Therefore, Parsons' account suggests that as the process of industrialisation began to shape society an ever increasing body of specialised learning emerged. With the advent of such knowledge the potential of abuse and exploitation became very real, both in relation to the individual and society as a whole. It was, therefore, necessary for occupational bodies such as the professions to evolve to act as the guardians of these new and expanding fields of learning, and so ensure that no harm resulted. Thus professionalism is both inevitable - in that it is the logical outworking of the growth of scientific expertise and knowledge, and the subsequent division of labour, and also desirable, in that it ensures that this knowledge is used for altruistic, rather than self-interested ends.

However, a number of questions must be asked of this account which sees knowledge as the principal resource and characteristics of a professional body. The first concerns the breadth of the criterion involved. It is so wide that virtually any occupational body that has specialist knowledge and skills could be included. The account does not make it clear why professionals should enjoy the type of social status that they do, in contrast with something like the scientific community. The scientist brings skills to society that are essential for its well-being and development, but do not exercise the occupational autonomy or influence found in the professions.

Freidson illustrates this further in his critique of the claims that it is a systematic body of theory that is the basis of professional status in society. He notes that with aspiring professions, 'if there is no systematic body of theory, it is created for the purpose of being able to say there is' (Freidson, 1970, p.80). He argues the knowledge of the professions is not the key factor in professional identity for it is difficult to define what constitutes its 'abstract' and 'specialised' character. What is clear, however, is that prolonged courses of training are an important part of 'a deliberate rhetoric in a political process of lobbying, public relations, and other forms of persuasion to attain a desirable end - full control over its work' (Freidson, 1970, p.80).

A second question is whether such an approach actually corresponds to empirical and historical realities. For instance, the ordained ministry is an established and widely recognised profession, yet it is difficult to account for in terms of specialised knowledge. It may be argued that theology provides a theoretical body of learning, but its application is very different from that found in other professions, such as medicine. For one thing the ordained minister attempts to communicate elements of this specialised knowledge to his or her parishioners. Thus the model proposed, although appropriate to some forms of professions, fails to accommodate others. In the same way, this approach assumes a historical discontinuity in the professions which, as we have already seen, cannot be legitimated in the light of the historical facts (see 5.2).

## **altruism**

A second and less pervasive account of the significance of the professions sees them as the custodians of a specific moral tradition. Hauerwas, for instance, argues that the existence of the medical profession reflects and embodies 'our most profound moral commitments as a community' (Hauerwas, 1986, p.6). It is the specific moral nature and presuppositions in the work of the professional that gives the professions their distinctive occupational identity. As Hughes argues, the work of the professions is characterised by 'trust' (Hughes, 1963). This trust is only possible in the light of certain moral presuppositions that not only guarantee the competence of the service that one receives, but the 'collective orientation' of the practitioner himself or herself. Thus the professions represent an occupational form based on altruistic intent, rather than egotism and self-interest, and, as such, embody and reflect very important and necessary social values and commitments. It is in this regard, that the principal significance of the professions in the life of society is to be found.



It was Durkheim who was the first to develop this understanding of the professions (Durkheim, 1957). He believed the professions provide an important basis for social order and social solidarity. Aware of the increasing fragmentation of communities and social life in the wake of industrialisation, he maintained that it was necessary for society to find new mediums to provide social cohesion, the evolution of the professions being one such medium.

Durkheim was convinced that if a society is structured around purely economic self-interests, then it will slowly undermine its social order and life. Yet he advocated that in becoming part of a social group individual self-interest comes to be regulated. Association itself creates a form of morality which controls and influences the behaviour of those that make up the association. Thus in order to sustain society it is necessary for associations to appear that provide a moral framework for individual behaviour, particularly in the occupational sphere. Durkheim, therefore, believed the professions emerged as 'a moral and communal order to counter the anomaly of industrial society' (Elliott, 1972, p.9).

At the heart of this analysis is the altruistic nature of the professions. It is the 'strategic significance in our society' of a set of occupational groups which are not, either in their own opinion or by and large in the public estimation, devoted to the 'goal of their own profit, but rather in some sense to service' that provides the professions with their significance (Parsons, 1937, p.36). As Paul Halmos stresses, the professions introduce a 'pull' towards a more collectivist and 'other-regarding ...social functioning of individuals', in that they weaken 'the laissez faire licence of a free enterprise, the rapacity of penal justice, the harshness of educational discipline and the mercenaries of "marketable" doctoring' (Halmos, 1970, p.57). Halmos argues that the professions are not simply the custodians of particular forms of knowledge and expertise, as the application of professional knowledge implies particular social values and commitments, and the professions act as symbols of those values and commitments.

However, the supposedly altruistic orientation of the professions has been called into question in a number of ways. Freidson argues that there is no evidence to suggest that the professions are in some way more altruistic than a number of other occupations. Many non-professional occupations have codes of ethics and a 'service orientation', yet the difference is that the professions have successfully persuaded the public and the state that they are devoted to public service in a very distinctive way (Freidson, 1970, p.82).

The altruistic ideals and values of the professions, therefore, are not so much *embodied* as *imputed*. As Lees notes, 'it is at least questionable whether professional people are quite the monks growing their own vegetables in selfless pursuit of the public good that their pronouncements and demeanour would often have us believe' (quoted by Wilding, 1982, p.9). Thus to argue that the professions are the custodians of a particular moral tradition and value, is to be guilty of accepting professional ideologies and claims at face value.

Nevertheless, even accepting that the professions do not entirely embody the altruistic ideals to which they lay claim, the very fact that this moral tradition is employed within professional ideology and used in justifying professional identity and position, cannot simply be dismissed. For as Halmos argues, in this the professions are preserving a particular moral tradition in the life of society, even if it is only at an ideological level (Halmos, 1970, 1973). However, although accepting that one cannot entirely dismiss the moral significance of the professions, it also must be recognised that this does not provide an adequate account in and of itself for the social significance of the professions.

## **power**

As we have already seen, most of the significant sociological studies of the professions in the last twenty-five years have concentrated on the notions of professional autonomy and power. This perspective suggests the social significance of the professions is not primarily found in the values that they embody or the expertise that they possess, but in the power that they are granted. The professions are socially and politically sanctioned forms of occupation that provide for a particular form of social control and status. Their significance is found not in the needs of society, but in the interests that they represent. That is to say, the professions are, above all else, interest groups. Their role in the life of society must be understood in terms of the way in which they develop, protect and sustain these interests. Professional people are, as Titmuss notes, 'whether they be doctors, social workers or teachers...pre-eminently people with status problems' (quoted by Wilding, 1982, p.8).

Freidson stresses that the term profession should be regarded simply as a description of a form of occupational control. A profession is 'an occupation which has assumed a dominant position in a division of labour, so that it gains control over the determination

of the substance of its own work' (Freidson, 1970, p.xvii). Thus it is in looking at the relationships of power and the structures which permit an occupation to control its work that the social significance of the professions is to be found. In view of this, Freidson claims the only significant attribute distinguishing professions from other occupations is the legal right - granted through negotiation with the politically powerful - to control the content of their work. 'The supposed characteristics of professions - service ethic, length of training, and so on can all then be regarded as links in the chain of argument directed to that end, rather than as inherent and inalienable characteristics of the work of particular occupations - in short as attempts at gaining and justifying power and privilege' (Freidson, 1973, p.24).

Thus Freidson draws an important distinction between the *content* and the *terms* of professional work: 'the former comprising the tasks the professional performs; the latter, the conditions and sanctions governing the conduct of those tasks' (Roberston, 1987, p.220). He suggests that the professions in the final analysis are not primarily concerned with meeting a social need or providing a particular service, but with ensuring their own social position and power. The addressing of social needs, the claims to altruistic service and expertise are all means to this end, rather than ends in themselves.

For instance, Freidson argues the medical profession has achieved its powerful position in society by establishing claims to specialist knowledge and a concern for the service of humanity. 'Expertise' and 'ethicality' are resources used by this profession to justify its monopoly, occupational control, and self-regulation to the dominant socio-political powers and the general public. The medical profession status and power is justified by the expert nature of the work involved and sustained by 'the persuasive profession of the extraordinary trustworthiness of its members' (Freidson, 1970, p.xvii). Thus Freidson concludes:

Professionalisation might be defined as a process by which an organised occupation, usually but not always by virtue of making a claim to special esoteric competence and to concern for the quality of its work and its benefits to society, obtains the exclusive right to perform a particular kind of work, control training for and access to it, and control the right of determining and evaluating the way the work is performed (Freidson, 1973, p.22).

This is a political process. Freidson insists that no matter how disinterested a profession's concern for knowledge or humanity is, it must become an interest group in order to advance its aims and to protect itself from those with competing aims. The

social significance of the professions can only be understood in the context of this conflict. It is not necessarily that a profession is motivated consciously and solely by self-interest, but that it does represent certain aims and goals in the life of society that have to be reconciled with other goals and interests. Thus quite apart from the development of a profession, the *maintenance and improvement* of the profession's position in the marketplace, and in the division of labour surrounding it, requires continuous political activity and support to ensure its interests. Freidson maintains, therefore, 'On the formal associational level, professions are inextricably and deeply involved in politics' (Freidson, 1973, p.30).

In view of this, Freidson argued 'The foundation of medicine's control over its work is...clearly political in character, involving the aid of the state in establishing and maintaining the profession's pre-eminence' (Freidson, 1970, p.23). Berlant takes up a similar theme, suggesting that a relationship between political and professional interests is fundamental to the existence of a profession. He believes, 'a compatible constellation of interests' has to exist between professions seeking social status and power and the dominant socio-political forces in society. The state requires the professions to perform important social functions and the professions require the state to enforce their monopoly and position in order to allow them to realise their occupational aims and objectives.

Wilding develops these ideas even further. He maintains that there are various ways in which the interests of the state and the interests of the professions may be seen to be related (Wilding, 1982, pp.10-12). Starting with the assumption that it is through a political process that professional status is realised, his work suggests that one such view sees the professions as 'occupational groups which have been taken over by the state or have forged an alliance with it' (Wilding, 1982, p.15). Professions provide for the state 'apolitical' solutions to social problems and needs, that focus on the individual and not on oppressive social structures and relations. They 'exalt expert solutions to social problems at the expense of political solutions' (Wilding, 1982, p.16). They give the impression that social needs and tensions can be resolved through the application of therapeutic technical expertise, rather than changes in the social order. Thus the professions are essentially conservative in nature and help sustain the status quo, as they 'locate the causes of delinquency and deviance safely within the individual rather than in the economic and social system' (Wilding, 1982, p.16).

Professions are also useful to governments in that they help contain some of the negative and destructive effects found in a modern industrial, capitalist, free-market economy. They 'alleviate some of the health-denying impact of industrial capitalism through the provision of state medicine', as well as, 'socialise the next generation to an ethic of competition, individualism and self-help' (Wilding, 1982, p.16). The government, therefore, grants and delegates power and occupational autonomy to the professions because they provide a social mechanism which is politically useful and serves the interests of the dominant socio-political elite. Thus the professions represent a government sanctioned force for social control which help sustain an 'inequitable social order' (Wilding, 1982, p.16).

In view of this, Wilding argues that the significance of the professions can be understood in relation to three functions that they serve in advanced capitalist society:

(Firstly) they stand as an expression of state concern for private troubles which have been accepted as public issues. Secondly, their expertise legitimates state action....Thirdly, the welfare professions provide a rich source of desirable jobs in the public and private sectors for members of elite and middle-class groups where such groups can enjoy varying degrees of power, privilege and freedom in their work and, through their efforts, help to maintain the system which supports them in varying degrees of elegance (Wilding, 1982, p.17).

The significance of the professions, therefore, is to be found in the interests that they serve, rather than the social needs that they meet.

However, a number of questions need to be asked of this account, particularly in the light of the increasingly adversarial nature of the relationship between the professions and political powers. According to this view, the reason that political powers grant legislation that allows for the power and autonomy of the professions is that it is in its interest to do so. It would seem to follow from this, if the professions are 'the technicians and tacticians of piecemeal social engineering rather than the strategic planners of social change', it would not be in the government's interests to undermine professional powers and monopolies (Wilding, 1982, p.17). Yet this is exactly what is taking place in a number of Western countries. This implies an alternative explanation given by Wilding that the professions represent 'a mechanism for accommodating the powerful and potentially conflicting interests of the state and powerful occupational groups....(Thus) the granting of professional status can be regarded as a practical method of fitting certain powerful occupational interests into a democratic society, a process of expert, occupational incorporation' (Wilding, 1982, p.11).

Another difficulty with this account is raised by Halmos. He argues simply to dismiss the altruistic intent of the professions as a device by which to sustain occupational self-interests fails to appreciate the moral significance of occupations that include in their occupational commitments the care of others. Even accepting that such commitments may not always be fully realised, to hold to a purely sceptical view of the professions is 'to deny the potential of growth' in the direction of their aspirations (Halmos, 1973, p.8). Such an approach 'destroys its own moral credibility by its unqualified and totalistic self-deprecations and denunciations' (Halmos, 1973). Yet Halmos' view could be seen to be more of a prescription rather than an explanation of professional behaviour, for as he recognises professions do not always fulfil their altruistic intent and some explanation of this is required. Nevertheless, the professions do embody a distinctive moral tradition and although it is possible to dismiss this as an occupational control mechanism, this may fail to fully appreciate the significance and importance of these moral values in professional identity and the life of society.

A further issue with this account is that it fits well with an understanding of what Halmos calls 'the personal service professions', but is not so accommodating in relation to engineering, accountancy or industrial design. The understanding of the professions as a government agency of social control fits best with the professional aspirations of social work, but is difficult to reconcile with other forms of professional occupation such as accountancy. Nevertheless, the idea of power and autonomy as the defining characteristic of the professions and their significance is very persuasive. There can be little doubt of the social status and influence that the professions enjoy and the power that they wield in social life and this perspective provides an effective account of why that is (Wilding, 1982).

It also highlights the reason that medicine, law, lecturing and divinity have been considered to be the foremost of the professions, in that they enjoy the greatest degree of occupational autonomy and power in their own designed spheres of activity. In the same way, it accounts for the reason that other occupations such as nursing have not been granted a fully professional status in that they are not free to define the terms of their work (Freidson, 1970). Moreover, this approach provides a category that is able to embrace the diversity found in those occupations claiming professional status, recognising that many professional attributes are means to an end, rather than ends in themselves. For instance, it allows for a correspondence between industrial design and divinity in that each is seen to share a type of occupational autonomy and power.



Freidson's understanding of professionalism as a particular pattern of occupational control is also helpful in two other ways. This perspective alerts us to the occupational self-interests of the professions, as it calls into question the accepted interpretations of professional relationships and highlights the strategies for 'social closure' - 'the process by which social collectives seek to maximise rewards by restricting access to rewards and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles' (Wilding, 1982, p.9). It also illustrates the significance of the professions in the socio-political order. It emphasises that one cannot deny that there is a correlation between the professions and the existing socio-political order which is mutually re-enforcing. This connection may be seen at various levels, rooted in the value of the work to the well-being of society or in the social connections of the occupation with the dominant socio-political groups, or the relationship between the values of the profession and values dominant in society. At whatever level, there is clearly a correspondence between the professions and the sustaining of the existing socio-political order that cannot be ignored.

### **a definition of professionalism**

Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, I propose to follow a variant of Freidson's definition of professionalism. Yet I want to argue that professional autonomy and power is secured, not in the first instance, through socio-political powers, but through the values that are embodied in the occupation itself. As Wilding suggests it is because of the 'service orientation and ethical code, and perhaps the class background and the values of the profession' that the state is willing to grant particular privileges and responsibilities to certain occupations (Wilding, 1982, p.11). In other words, I want to argue that it is the relationship between the distinctive value commitments of the professional practitioner and the work in which he or she engages that secures this autonomy and power. As Hughes insists the defining characteristic of the professions is the fact that they ask of their clients a particular form of trust.

Johnson develops this type of definition further. He notes one of the consequences of the social division of labour is the 'emergence of specialised occupational skills' (Johnson, 1972, p.41). This results in 'relationships of social and economic dependence and, paradoxically, relationships of social distance....While specialisation creates systematic relationships of interdependence, it also introduces potentialities for autonomy' (Johnson, 1972, p.41).

Such social distance results in an uncertainty in the consumer-producer relationship. Yet this uncertainty, which Johnson describes as 'indeterminacy', can be reduced in two ways. Either the producer is controlled to a greater extent by the consumer, thus reducing an occupational group's autonomy by means of institutional control, or the producer maintains his autonomy, but regulates his activities in such a way as to facilitate trust. That is to say, Johnson claims, 'Those occupations which are associated with peculiarly acute tensions...have given rise to a number of institutionalised forms of control, "professionalism" being one' (Johnson, 1972, p.45). Professionalism is a social mechanism by which an occupation establishes itself as trustworthy through reducing indeterminacy with a code of professional ethics and moral self-regulation.

Yet this is not to say that political and social forces are not important in understanding the professions. Socio-political sanction plays an important part in the process by which the trustworthiness of a profession is established and occupational autonomy and power sustained. As Freidson, notes, 'The profession's service orientation is a public imputation it has successfully won in a process by which its leaders have persuaded society to grant and support its autonomy' (Freidson, 1970, p.82). If a profession is to be granted a position of true trust, then it requires to be socially sanctioned. The autonomy and power that a profession holds has to be seen to be acceptable in the life of society.

Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, **a profession is seen as an occupational body that has secured a specific autonomy and power in its work through the social recognition of certain moral value commitments and orientations.** The significance of the professions in the life of society is that they represent an occupational form that expresses the *craveat emptor* of the ordained ministry rather than the *credat caveat* of business. This may be seen to serve both the interests of the occupational body itself and the interests of society and the existing socio-political order. The self-interests of an occupation are served in that they gain through this autonomy and power that gives them a particular social status, whereas the interests of society are served in that there is a moral regulation of the services that the professions provide.

## **5.4 is the ordained ministry a profession ?**

The response one gives to this question is very much dependent on the way in which you interpret the professions. Historically speaking the ordained ministry is one of the oldest professions, identified with law and 'physic' from at least the sixteenth century. 'The specific connection of the word "profession" with these occupations probably came in the first instance via the higher faculties of the medieval universities, whose degrees served as licences both to teach and to practise, or profess, the disciplines of theology, physic and law' (Prest, 1987, p.12). The professional ethos in many ways finds its roots in the occupational identity of the clergy, as it was one of the first occupations to assume a relationship between the personal value commitments of the individual and the work done. If this is a criterion by which we define professionalism, then ordained ministry clearly continues to be a profession. However, it would be wrong to suggest that professional identity is something given, rather than something which evolved over a considerable period of time in response to the changing nature of society.

### **objections to the professional designation of the ordained ministry.**

In view of this, a number of writers have called into question the appropriateness of the professional designation of the ordained ministry. The first sociologists to exclude the clergy from the list of professions was Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933). As we have seen, they maintain there is a significant difference between the forms that the professions took in pre and post-industrial Britain. Although many features of the latter can be shown to have been derived from the earlier forms of occupational organisation, there is a definite movement away from a 'status' towards an 'occupational' orientation. The professions are no longer simply 'an appendage to the high status groups in society', but have become an essential part of the functioning of the modern world and it is on the basis of social utility they are given recognition and professional status.

Obviously historically this emphasis was far more amenable to other forms of profession, especially those that were based on forms of scientific learning. These professions could demonstrate a very definite relationship between the theoretical learning that they possessed and its application in relation to society. With the ordained ministry the relationship is considerably more ambiguous and with continuing

secularisation the social 'usefulness' of the profession was unclear. Carr-Saunders and Wilson, therefore, conclude a very real tension is seen to exist between the modern professions and the nature of the ordained ministry.

Coxon takes this conclusion even further when he argues that the ordained ministry of the Church of England is only 'professional in a sense long long extinct!' (Coxon, 1979, p.51). He assumes that an area of technical and specialised knowledge that is the unique preserve of an occupation is the essential defining characteristic of any modern profession. Yet in this area ordained ministry is seen to be deficient. Theology does not function as does the specialised knowledge of the other professions. Coxon claims, 'A body of theory can count as professional knowledge only if it is the basis on which action is taken or advised....(Yet) the clergyman does not give advice on the basis of his theological learning; rather he passes on his theological knowledge through his teaching and preaching....(For) theology cannot be the theoretical basis for specialised professional activity, because it is not specialised knowledge in the first place' (Coxon, 1979, p.47). Thus the clergy appear to lack one of the fundamental defining characteristics of any modern profession in that they do not have a socially relevant area of technical and specialised knowledge that is the unique preserve of the profession.

In reply to this, Glasse argues that theology is a sufficient basis for professional activity. He points to the fact that although the ordained ministry endeavours 'to develop biblically literate and theologically articulate laymen', the nature of theological training goes beyond the communication of a simple world-view (Glasse, 1964, p.49). The ordained minister's 'professional education provides him not only with a body of knowledge, but a theory of his work. The professional preacher will not just deliver sermons. He will preach to some purpose with some end in view. He will know not only what he is preaching, but why he is preaching. This theory will be based upon the broadest application of his theological-biblical-historical-practical studies' (Glasse, 1964, p.48). That is to say, a theological discipline provides a whole framework within which the various elements and skills of the ordained ministry are brought together and given application. The specialised knowledge is comprised not only of theological and historical information, but the whole framework in which this is set.

Others like Larson have also rejected the designation of the ordained ministry as a profession because of the nature of theological knowledge. The process of professionalisation, for her, is an attempt to translate one order of scarce resources -

special knowledge and skills - into another - social and economic rewards. Professions are based on the ability of an occupational association to develop and sustain a monopoly in an area of specialised knowledge that is in demand because of its social utility (Larson, 1977). Clearly the clergy do not possess such a body of knowledge and cannot legitimately claim the status of an important professional service in the functioning of modern society. They are an occupational body that is marginal to social concerns and isolated from the mainstream of social life. To prescribe a professional occupational identity, therefore, would appear inappropriate.

However, these objections tend to be based on a false dichotomy between 'rational' and 'traditional' forms of professionalism. They assume that the professions are custodians of the scientific and technical expertise that emerged out of the Industrial Revolution. As the ordained ministry fails to fit with this understanding of the professions, it is rejected as a profession. Yet as O'Day points out the principal professions of law, medicine and university teaching were established long before the Industrial Revolution. Thus to define the professions as occupational bodies that emerged to protect the expertise and knowledge which evolved from the industrialisation of Western society is to suggest an account that is ahistorical and is difficult to establish in anything other than very selective empirical studies (See 5.3).

Moreover, these accounts also fail to explain the fact that despite the marginal nature of religion in modern society, the clergy are still seen as a high ranking and prestigious profession. Glasse notes that research from both America and Europe shows that the three assumptions that '(1) the ministry is a profession of low status; (2) what status the ministry has is declining; (3) the image of the ministry is unattractive' is without factual basis (Glasse, 1964, pp.105-106)<sup>2</sup>.

Russell attempts to account for this by suggesting, 'In contemporary society, the clergy still occupy a prominent position in the vertical hierarchy of prestige accorded to occupational roles, and in surveys the clergy consistently receive high ratings. It is on the horizontal plane that the altered position of the clergyman's role can be clearly seen' (Russell, 1980, p.281). Yet he fails to answer why one should not concur with the other. To argue that it is simply because of historical precedent, does not explain why the clergy should continue to be perceived in such a way when other historical

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<sup>2</sup> For more recent studies that confirm these same findings (see Rawson, Bryman and Hinnings, 1977; Russell, 1980; Christian Research Institute, 1992).

professions such as the military have declined. The military would certainly appear to have a far greater function within modern society than religion. Furthermore, it also fails to explain why such ratings should remain consistently high. As Glasse notes with some irony, the general public continue to rate the social significance and prestige of the clerical profession in a way that is much higher than the clergy do themselves (Glasse, 1964, p.106).

### **ordained ministry as a profession**

On the other hand, Goode sees the ordained ministry as one of the four basic professions along with medicine, law and scholarship. One of the reasons for this is that Goode identifies the two essential 'core characteristics' of the professions as 'a prolonged specialised training in a body of abstract knowledge and a collectivity or service orientation' (Goode, 1960, p.903). Obviously the ordained ministry fulfils both of these requirements. Russell suggests that the reason for this is that the nature of the ordained ministry of the Church of England in the nineteenth century approximated increasingly to that of the professional man, though for various historical, legal, and constitutional reasons, the clergy were inhibited from identifying totally with this professional model (Russell, 1980, p.291).

According to Russell, with the changes brought about by the industrial revolution and the rise of the bourgeois the nature of the ordained ministry changed. Due to the restructuring of society, and the increasing importance of the middle classes and their aspirations, the ordained ministry took on a new significance as a means of social mobility. The ordained ministry provided an ideal way for sections of the middle classes to take up positions of power and influence, while giving a means of income. Yet the relationship between the personal value commitments of the practitioners and the nature of the work remained, as did the notion of vocation, although the ordained ministry had clearly become a source for potential self-advancement and financial security.

Therefore, a distinct change is seen in the ordained ministry. From having provided an expression of social position, it had become a means by which to ensure an income for oneself, while gaining social recognition and influence. Yet with the loss of the strong association between the land gentry and the ordained ministry, the basis of the profession's social status was not as strong, and there was a need to find other ways



to justify its social position. With many of the other professions, therefore, it looked to among other things the length and nature of the education involved.

With the subsequent increase in specialised fields of learning, the relationship between education and professionalism provided an ideal way to legitimise the claims to social position and occupational autonomy. The professions were the 'learned bodies' that brought the necessary skills to enable society to function effectively. As with other professions, therefore, the ordained ministry placed an increasing emphasis on the acquiring of an expertise in a particular field of theoretical learning as the basis of admission. Thus the elite nature of the ordained ministry continued grounded in education rather than class considerations. (Although one must acknowledge that education and class are still in many ways related).

However, this emphasis on specialised technical knowledge was far more amenable to the legal and medical professions. These professions could demonstrate a very definite relationship between the theoretical learning that they possessed and its application in relation to society. With the ordained ministry the relationship was considerably more ambiguous and with continuing secularisation the social 'usefulness' of the profession was unclear. However, the Established nature of the Church ensured that the ordained ministry continued as an occupation with sufficient grounds to remain as a recognised and powerful profession.

Thus a very definite evolution in the occupational nature of the ordained ministry may be seen that touches upon both the reasons for engaging in the occupational activity and the qualifications that are necessary. Russell claims the ordained ministry changed from being a profession that was vocational in nature and required that one was part of the Oxbridge elite with all the social and economic implications that this had, to one in which economic and social advancement is possible through formal intensive qualification and training.

In view of this, we can consider the ordained ministry as a modern profession. The clergy still enjoy a reasonable degree of social esteem and exercise considerable occupational autonomy. By comparison to other professions, the degree of control exercised over work both at a corporate and individual level is still significant. The spiritual service to his or her clients is determined almost wholly by the religious practitioner, as is its content. Admission to the clerical professions is governed by a number of professional control mechanisms which invariably are controlled by the

clergy themselves (length of training, selection procedures etc.). The profession also exercises considerable power over its clients. The minister or priest is not considered on an equal footing with the congregation (even within congregational style churches) and so has considerable latitude and influence as an authority figure. Thus the producer-consumer relationship, that Johnson speak of, is resolved very much in occupational terms in favour of the ordained minister, who has 'power' over those he or she serves.

This occupational relationship and control is safeguarded by a number of characteristics common to other professions that reduce indeterminacy. The two principles are the notion of altruistic service and professional competence rooted in an extended training process. Although the clergy do not have a formula code of professional ethics such as the medical profession, they do have a code of practice which is epitomised in ordination vows. The ordained minister engages in the performance of his or her professional functions as a member of a 'professional organisation' bound by a code of practice. He or she is not seen to be serving, in the first instance, his or her own interests, but the interests of others. The recipients of these pastoral services, therefore, can have complete trust in those who serve them, despite the power they exercise over them, for they are bound by ethical standards and a professional code of conduct.

Such claims also protect the occupation's standing in relation to the wider society and justify the ordained ministry's social position. The education process provides a basis for ensuring that a professional elite is maintained with a shared set of values (and possibly denominational interests) that reinforces the correlation between knowledge and power in the modern world. Therefore, if we define a professional occupation in terms of autonomy and power the ordained ministry is clearly a profession. It may be seen to be an occupation which has secured a specific autonomy and power in its work through the social recognition of certain moral value commitments and orientations. The clergy gain control over the terms of their work through the service ideals with which the occupational identity of the ordained ministry is associated.

Yet, if we accept that professionalisation is a dynamic rather than a static phenomenon, the professional nature of the clergy is subject to change and unresolved tensions. In view of this, some sociologists have suggested that the ordained ministry is a profession in decline citing the decreasing number of applicants and the lowering of academic requirements for ordained ministry. Certainly this would correspond with the idea that professions exist in order to serve the self-interests of both social power

groups and its practitioners. With churches finding themselves ever marginalised in the life of society, their ability to provide the basis for social stability has decreased, along with their social standing and influence. Moreover, the financial pressures on the life of the churches has meant that they are possibly unable to provide the financial resources to sustain a profession. However, despite these indicators of decline, the ordained ministry still express a number of very distinctive characteristics in its occupational control and expression that firmly places it within the professions. Thus a professional model is still the best perspective with which to interpret the ordained ministry in its occupational functions and future.

## Conclusion

Freidson claims that unlike other occupations 'professions are deliberately granted autonomy, including the exclusive right to determine who can legitimately do its work and how the work should be done' (Freidson, 1970, p.72). Although almost all occupations are seen to struggle to achieve these ends, it is the professions that have been granted the right to this form of autonomy and power legitimately. That is to say, professionalism represents a socially sanctioned form of occupational control and power over others. The basis of this, as I have argued, is the service or collective orientation that is seen to be implicit in the value commitments of the professional practitioner.

In view of this understanding, the ordained ministry may clearly be seen to be a profession. The clergy represent a type of occupational body that clearly control the terms of their work and exercise power over those they 'serve'. This power and autonomy is socially sanctioned, not only through the Establishment nature of the Church of England, but through the acceptance of the ordained ministry as a recognised and accepted occupational role in the life of society. In fact, it could be argued that in the light of this definition and the historical development of the professions the ordained ministry provides the paradigm for the nature of the professions, the clergy suggesting a model of a politically and socially sanctioned occupational role that exercises considerable power over others on the basis of altruistic concern.

## Chapter Six

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# The problem of clerical professionalisation

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Following the understanding of the professions from the previous chapter, professionalisation can be seen to be the process by which occupations gain and maintain autonomy and power. Occupational bodies convince those under their sphere of influence that they should have the right to self-determination, and legislation or regulations are passed that permit the group to exclude non-members from practice, control the client-practitioner relationship, and define accountability in terms of their peers.

Accepting that the ordained ministry is a 'profession', in terms of historical and sociological definitions, we need now to consider the problem of clerical professionalisation. This problem concerns the continued legitimacy of a professional occupational identity in relation to the clergy, in view of the changing nature of society and professionalism.

### **professions and social change**

It has been suggested that the professions seek to maintain a particular identity for their members in the form of a collective self-image (Heraud, 1973). This in turn serves an ideological purpose in supporting and sustaining the position of that profession in the wider society. Yet such identities are constantly threatened by changes in the immediate environment of the profession and the changing structures of society (King, 1968). Changes in technology, in knowledge and lay empowerment all provide 'a source of repeated challenges to the validity of the professions' established identities' (King, 1968, p.37).

The result is a profession constantly finds itself in a state of flux as 'its objective situation begins to place demands upon its members which run counter to the collective self-image it tries to impress upon them' (King, 1968, p.36). In view of this, different strategies are employed by professional groups to safeguard their position and power. The ability of a profession to sustain itself in dominant and influential positions within social groups relates directly to its ability to defend the basis of its authority, in the face of the changing nature of society. Thus a constant search for ways of preserving, modifying or developing professional authority, usually through a redefining or shifting of its perceived basis, is present in the professions.

Freidson illustrates this in the medical practitioner's need to sanction his or her role in a way that is distinctively different from that of the scientist. In order to ensure the authority and 'the power over' the client that is necessary in a professional context the medical practitioner must be able to persuade the client that their advice should be recognised and acted upon. In a scientific context, the scientist is able to justify a position in terms of technical competence or 'the authority of knowledge' alone. 'Colleges constitute the consumers of the practitioner's special skill', so there is a shared frame of reference to which appeal may be made. However, with the medical practitioner the situation is quite different because 'the consumers are lay clients'. The medical practitioner requires to find a way in which the client will be persuaded to act on his or her advice, but is also aware 'laymen know neither the occupational rules of evidence nor the basic content of his skill' (Freidson, 1968, p.27).

Freidson argues that the professions resolve this problem by 'formal institutional means' which minimises the role of persuasive evidence in professional interaction with clientele. The work of the professional is set in a formal institutional context that gives credibility and recognition to his or her role. He or she is designated as an expert in such a way as to exclude all other claimants, this designation 'being official and bureaucratic' and usually 'formally established by law' (Freidson, 1968, p.28). Thus in a profession the stress is on *imputed* rather than demonstrated competence and expertise. The professional is seen to be an expert, someone who through social sanctioning is declared worthy of the faith and trust that you are being asked to put in him or her.



'The formal, institutionalized status of profession is granted by society on the basis of having been persuaded that an occupation is competent and responsible' (Freidson, 1968, p.32). An occupational body must establish itself as fit to be granted this imputed status. The occupation needs to meet with a particular criterion that accords with the dominant socio-political values that allows them to be declared trustworthy and competent in dealing with a specific aspect of the life of society.

If we think of this in terms of the nature of the professional relationship that Johnson describes, the practitioner-client relationship will always be resolved in favour of the practitioner. However, such a relationship and power over a client and area of work requires to be justified if it is to be accepted by the client and the wider society. This may be done in various ways. In most modern professions it is legitimated in terms of expertise and the notion of altruistic service - the practitioner is working for your good.

However, the difficulty this creates for the ordained ministry is that the basis of their occupational autonomy and power was established in a very different social context. In its original medieval context the clerical profession derived its authority, power and status from the 'institutional and routinized charisma' of Christendom (Russell, 1980, p.28). The role of the clergy was legitimated in terms of the total society and the specific socio-political values granted considerable power and authority to the clerical profession. 'Indeed, as religion was the supreme legitimating and authorising agency in traditional society, so the clergyman was, in a real sense, the legitimator of all other roles, inasmuch as the values he disseminated established the worth of all activities in such a society' (Russell, 1980, p.28). Yet the situation has now changed dramatically and the clerical profession must find different ways by which to legitimate its continued control over its work and power over others. It must re-establish itself as a 'competent and reasonable' occupation in the eyes of modern society and its secular values.

## **6.1 ordained ministry and its social context**

The ordained ministry does not exist in a social vacuum, but has been subject to the same forces of professionalisation as are other forms of occupation. The analysis of Carr-Saunders and Wilson which confines the ordained ministry to a 'traditional' professionalism is too simplistic. There is no doubt that the nature of the professions has changed and that the Christian context in which they were once located, has been replaced by a secular frame of reference.

However, this is not to say that the clergy have been unaffected by the process of professionalisation and rationalisation that has taken place in the rest of society. The ordained ministry can be seen to be influenced by all of the characteristics of the modern professions (Campbell, 1982). The occupational identity of the clergy has not remained static, and although there have been significant indicators that the professional nature of the ordained ministry has been in decline, there has also been a tendency towards greater professionalisation. As Alastair Campbell points out:

Whereas in the past theological education often consisted of a broadly liberal education in the arts followed by exposure to the classical disciplines of theology, history and biblical studies, now there is an increasing emphasis on acquiring professional skills in preaching, administration, education, leading of worship and counselling. The minister as a 'man of learning' who picked up skills on the job is being gradually replaced by the model of the modern professional man and women carefully selected, methodically trained and tested for competence before accreditation by the professional group (Campbell, 1985, p.26).

Within most denominations the process of ministerial accreditation has become a well organised and clearly defined process that sets out to ensure the professional competence and expertise of those accredited to work within churches (Campbell 1982, p.42). Most denominations still require their ordinands to have the equivalent of a university training, along with other comprehensive probationary studies. Meanwhile, in the United States a number of clerical professional associations have sprung up, that encourage the increasing specialisation in pastoral care and other areas of ministry that has been seen on both sides of the Atlantic<sup>1</sup>. This has also coincided with an increasing awareness of occupational concerns amongst the clergy themselves. Despite the traditional models of ministry, greater consideration is now being given to pensions and insurance, even within the Roman Catholic Church. There is an introduction of fixed period contracts, job descriptions and regular job evaluations in Free Churches in Britain and in many churches in America. These various developments in ministerial accreditation, education and association may be seen as part of an on going strategy to defend the occupational power of the clergy and sustain their social position and influence.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, the American Academy of Parish Clergy a professional association committed to the raising of professional standards within the ordained ministry.

However, there have also been significant challenges to this established professional identity. The general decline in the role of institutional forms of religion in society has had significant consequences for clerical recruitment, although the overall decline in ordinands is now slowing<sup>2</sup>. The marginalisation of the clerical role in social life has also had some noticeable effects, while the impact of this on the occupational autonomy and professional standing of the ordained ministry is unclear. Certainly there is a need for caution in suggesting a straight forward correlation between modernity and the decline of the clerical profession. Nevertheless, various writers have seen the contemporary context of the ordained ministry posing a considerable threat to clerical professional identity.

### **the marginalisation of the clerical profession**

The principal threat Russell sees to the clerical profession is that the work in which the ordained ministry engages is no longer recognised as an important activity within the life of society, requiring professional application (Russell, 1980). With the gradual restructuring of society and social relations the clergy's involvement in the administration of law and order, the social and welfare services, and even education has steadily decreased. Thus 'in a predominately urban society, the Church is no longer seen as a focus of community and the clergy are no longer expected to perform those focal and representative functions which were revived from the clergyman's former position in a traditional rural society' (Russell, 1980, p.278). Russell continues:

By many, religious institutions are seen as part of the pre-technical, agrarian, paternalistic past, and in consequence are thought of as largely anachronistic in modern society. The word which is constantly employed to describe the situation of the contemporary Church is 'irrelevant', for the processes of social change have robbed the Church in this century of much of its former social, political, and cultural significance....Whereas, in the nineteenth century the clergyman's role received widespread social support and was accorded a commensurate significance, in the twentieth century the clergy are seen predominantly as the bearers of cultural inheritance and the exemplars of a moral and social tradition which is regarded as increasingly outmoded and unwanted at least in its traditional form (Russell, 1980, pp.261-262).

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<sup>2</sup> If we look at the general picture, taking in the ordained ministry of the various established denominations in Britain we see that in 1975 there were 38,900 ordinands, by 1985 there was 37,900, yet by 1995 there is going to be 38,700; a figure which is projected to stay relatively static well beyond the year 2005 - Christian Research Association (1994).

In such a situation, the religious knowledge and expertise on which the role of the clergy is based becomes irrelevant to the day-to-day decisions which people and groups face. The clergy comes to be 'characterised by marginality to the mainstream concerns of ordinary people', as people turn to other disciplines and experts seeking answers and advice (Russell, 1980, p.262).

This creates difficulties for the occupational identity and power of the ordained ministry for the role which they once served is undermined and their skills and expertise is no longer viewed as relevant. Russell even questions whether the role of the ordained ministry is part of the division of labour in a modern society. He claims 'In a sense, it has become "non-work". The clergyman does not have skills in the sense in which the term is used in modern society, and his theological insights and pastoral experience have no market value' (Russell, 1980, pp.281-282). The clergy's occupational functions primarily consist of activities which other people do, or choose not to do, in their leisure time: attending church meetings and functions, visiting elderly people in the community, going to a school or hospital as a visitor. And so, 'Beyond their liturgical functions, the clergy find it particularly difficult to make statements about the content of their role in terms to which the rest of society can readily relate' (Russell, 1980, p.282).

Russell, therefore, argues that the idea of the clergy as a professional occupational body is part of the historical development of the ordained ministry, which cannot now be justified by their role and function within society. The work that the clergy undertake and the role that they have can no longer be understood in terms of contemporary models of professional occupational activity, for there is an increasing gulf between the nature of the ordained ministry and the other professions. Thus he concludes a point needs to be reached when the clergy recognise the changing nature of their position within society and adapt the occupational model that they employ accordingly.

However, his analysis is built around a number of questionable assumptions. Firstly, it employs a functionalist understanding of society and social trends. In a very telling quote, Russell writes, 'It is observable from the sociological standpoint that society tends to discard those roles and institutions for which it has no further functional use. In part, the increasing marginality of the Church and the clergyman's role is occasioned by the operation of this process' (Russell, 1980, p.290). Work is that which serves a readily identifiable social function and purpose. What the clergy do no longer meets an identifiable occupational need within society, and so is outwith the public sphere of social functions and as such is essentially confined to the world of 'non-work' and

organised leisure. However, there is little empirical evidence to support Russell's view, and as we have already seen in the complex and diverse division of labour in modern society the clergy are still considered a prestigious occupation (see 5.4).

Secondly, Russell defines the professions primarily in terms of a body of specialised knowledge that has social utility, rather than as an occupation that has the ability to control and define the nature of its work. Again as we saw in the previous chapter this definition is itself problematic (see 5.3). Thirdly, Russell's work could be accused of failing to recognise the steps taken by the ordained ministry to protect its professional status. He fails to appreciate the complex and diverse effect that the modern world has had on the way the ordained ministry sees itself and interprets its role and organisational structures. For instance, he notes in England, 'the clergy have been particularly sensitive to changes which undermine their independent status. Whereas other professional men have come to terms with the idea that, in an advanced society, they must necessarily be employed within bureaucratic structures, the clergy have consistently indicated that they are unwilling to change in this way' (Russell, 1980, p.271). Yet this rather than suggesting that the professional identity of the ordained ministry is relatively weak, could be interpreted in a completely different way.

Following Freidson, if a profession is seen as an occupational body that is self-regulating, controlling access through educational requirements and codes and standards of practice, whose organisational structures reflect an 'occupational principle' rather than Weber's 'administrative principle' (see 5.2), then the ordained ministry may be seen not only to embody the professional ideal, but to be staunch defenders of it.

Nevertheless, Russell does point to an important change in the nature of the work in which the clergy are engaged from 'primary, necessary social importance to one of secondary, optional social significance'<sup>3</sup>. As Logan writes, 'The clergy find themselves frequently ministering on the periphery of society, ministering to people where they sleep rather than where they make the fundamental decisions governing their livelihood, ministering to their individual and private needs' (Logan, 1982, p.6).

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<sup>3</sup> This is with one important exception. The clergy are still required to solemnise and sanctify significant events in the national, civic, local, and family life of the nation. A representative function, therefore, is still held by the clergy that reflects the type of ambivalence found in society as a whole towards religion. The occupational activity of the clergy has been allocated a very definite sphere within the complex make-up of modern society.

This highlights a critical problem for clerical professionalisation which relates to the nature of the work that the clergy do in modern society. Russell rightly points out that the social context in which the ordained ministry work has dramatically changed and that this has had consequences for the occupational role of the clergy (Coxon, 1979, p.24). This also suggests a potential threat to the professional status of the ordained ministry for the demand for the services of a particular profession are an important factor in establishing the extent of its power and influence.

Freidson argues that the power of a profession is essentially persuasive and that the only ultimate sanction any occupational body has is to withdraw its services. Yet if a service which a profession offers is not in demand 'this threat is singularly hollow' (Freidson, 1968). In other words, the power of a profession is in part related to its ability to establish an occupational monopoly over an area and service in the life of society that is in demand. For instance, the power of the medical profession rests upon the credibility it has gained as a source of reliable therapy and support in situations of physical illness. Since health care impinges on virtually everyone's life at some time or other, and is seen not only as a desirable, but an essential service, doctors have considerable social prestige and economic bargaining power. Moreover, their 'power' over others and degree of social and political influence is much greater than that found in less successful professional groups, like social workers and nurses. Thus the demand for a professional service has a direct bearing on the occupational autonomy and influence, as well as, bargaining power of an occupation in the competition for salaries and working conditions.

In the light of Russell's analysis, therefore, the marginalised nature of Christianity and the work of the clergy has serious implications for the clerical profession. However, whether this necessitates a de-professionalisation of clerical occupational identity is questionable. The very strong historical sanctioning of the clergy as a profession, both politically and socially, means that despite their changing role in society their position as a profession is still generally accepted (see 5.4). Nevertheless, it would seem to suggest that the status and influence of the ordained ministry is slowly being eroded, and so the profession is now in a particularly weak position to defend its autonomy and power in the face of various challenges.



## **6.2 threats to the clerical profession**

This is not the only threat that exists to the professional identity of the clergy. Changes in the nature of the church and social perceptions of the profession have also had considerable bearing on the professional status of the ordained ministry. A shift in the perception of professionalism has meant that the clergy find themselves generally in an ambivalent and exposed position. Although still accorded high levels of prestige and power, there is a significant minority that have begun to question the legitimacy of the position and role that the clerical professional has in the life of the church and society (Russell, 1980, p.289).

This awareness has also coincided with dramatic changes in the actual make-up of church congregations. 'The Church in contemporary society may be regarded as a voluntary associational organisation' (Russell, 1980, p.293-294). Like other voluntary associational organisations, the church in modern society has become much more dependent on the goodwill of its members and the decisions people take about how they will spend their leisure time, energy and wealth. Thus the characteristics of the professional relationship with its power over others are increasingly difficult to sustain in the face of the increased power of the 'religious consumer' and 'the calls from a more educated and articulate population for greater participation and professional accountability' (Wilding, 1982, p.85).

### **the changing nature of the church**

The changing nature of the church in modern Western society presents one of the most significant challenges to the professional status of the ordained ministry. The church represents the institutional framework in which the work of the clergy takes place and is an important consideration in the power and autonomy of the ordained ministry. Often the most serious threats to any profession arise when 'organizational goals, control, supervision, incentives and decision making conflict with professional norms and standards' (Hall, 1992, p.50). Organisational constraints whether in terms of conflicting aims or allocation of resources, invariably reflect one of the greatest challenges to professional autonomy and power. For instance, this is most clearly seen in the National Health Service where medical practitioners are being required to try and reconcile professional ideals with economic cut backs and restructuring (Freidson 1988; Jensen & Mooney, 1990). In the same way, within the church financial pressures and

increasing lay empowerment are forcing serious questions to be asked of the clerical profession.

### 1] limited resources

With dwindling congregations and increasing ecclesiastical overheads, the resources of the British churches are increasingly limited. This brings very definite financial pressures to bear on the life of the church and its ordained ministry which run contrary to any professional aspirations. Limited resources not only limit the freedom of the professional to act in the way that he or she may wish, but also tends to make the professional susceptible to outside pressures and evaluations. As 'value for money' becomes a very important consideration this can subject the work of the professional to scrutiny and controls that may even conflict with professional practice and values, and certainly limits the power of the practitioner (Liss & Nordenfelt, 1990). Moreover, it has been claimed that attempts to maintain a professional full-time paid ministry when neither the resources within the church nor the strength of the occupational body is able to sustain this, results in 'overworked, underpaid, demoralised servants of the Church' (Logan, 1982).

Limited financial resources also affect the power and autonomy of a profession in other ways. A profession that is unable to provide financial security for its members appears to have its social status, which provides part of the basis for its power, weakened (Hall, 1992, p.52). Moore argues the income of a profession not only distinguishes the professional from the amateur, but supports the claim to exceptional competence. Pecuniary rewards consolidate the claim of occupational bodies to exclusive rights and power within a designated sphere (Moore, 1970, p.8). Thus a threat to the full-time paid standing of a profession is a threat to its professional power and influence. It also affects the public perception of a profession and undermines people's confidence in that profession.

In the view of this, the development of non-stipendiary ministry within the Church of England and in other denominations, is of considerable significance for the occupational identity of the clergy. This type of unpaid and part-time ordained ministry calls into question the need for a professional designation in relation to the work of the ordained ministry. As Russell comments, 'Auxiliary Pastoral Ministry is not so much a sub-profession but more a re-interpretation of the whole nature of ministry' (Russell, 1980, p.287). He adds:

The ambivalent, and uncertain attitude of the clerical profession to the Auxiliary Pastoral Ministry is in part related to the fact that no professional can view with equanimity the implication that its functions can be adequately performed either on a part-time basis or as a hobby. However, the principal cause of this unease would appear to lie in the dominant understanding of the clergyman's role as a professional role comparable with other professions in society. It is central to a profession that the prolonged socialization and training that the aspirant receives should form in him professional attitudes and behaviour patterns, and acquaint him with the ethos and the codes of conduct of a profession. Because a profession involves the totality of a man, part-time membership of a profession (after part-time training) is almost by definition impossible (Russell, 1980, p287).

The introduction of non-stipendiary ministry serves the interests of the ecclesiastical organisation, but undermines the professional aspirations and status of the clergy generally. Although those who engage in this form of ministry are invariably drawn from other professions, such as teaching, it nevertheless undermines the power and autonomy of the clerical profession. It challenges the ecclesiastical monopoly of the ordained ministry and fosters perceptions of ministry that make it difficult to maintain the claims to the status that allow for the power and autonomy of the profession. Yet the rise of non-stipendiary ordained ministry is not only a consequence of the limited financial resources within the churches, but also related to the growing empowerment of the laity (Russell, 1980, p.285).

## **2] lay empowerment**

The fact that the church in Britain is predominantly drawn from middle class and educated elements within society means that there is a resistance to the traditional forms of clerical professional control and pressure for lay empowerment. This has been re-enforced by a general shift in attitudes towards the role of the expert in society and the paternalistic values he or she is seen to sustain. Theological and ecclesiastical movements have contributed to a growing awareness as to the tensions that exist between the presence of a highly trained person, who encourages those around him or her to leave things entirely in their hands, and the various patterns of ministry in scripture and the early history of the Church. This in turn has precipitated a greater participation on the part of the laity in the ministry of the churches. Yet this increased participation by the laity in the life and ministry of the church has meant the ordained ministry finds it increasingly difficult to legitimate its historic function and role as a profession.

Professional power is bound up with an occupation's ability to maintain the exclusive rights over a particular form of work. This has proved increasingly difficult as the laity have had more and more involvement in almost all of the aspects that once made up the work of the ordained ministry. Moreover, professional power is also related to the ability to maintain a dependence between practitioner and client. The greater the dependence of the client on the practitioner, the greater the power that the professional is able to exercise. Yet this dependence is based on the fact that a clear distinction is able to be drawn on the basis of the unique expertise that a professional possesses. With growing lay involvement such a distinction is seen to be less and less realistic and acceptable in the life of the church. Thus lay empowerment serves the interests of the ecclesiastical organisation, but undermines the professional aspirations and status of the clergy further.

In this regard, one other point needs to be made in relation to the increasing number of women within the clerical profession. A number of studies have suggested that an influx of women into certain professions has actually lowered autonomy and hence deprofessionalised those occupations (Simpson and Simpson 1969; Hall, 1992). According to these studies, women tend to enter the professions of nursing, teaching and social work with less autonomy than men, and this lowered autonomy actually comes to be reflected in the profession itself. Historically professions have tended to reflect their origin in the role of the clergyman, which has been predominantly an exclusively male role in both Western and Eastern Christendom. 'Thus, all professions have been reluctant to admit women into full membership. In part, this derives from the lingering belief that the admission of women would adversely affect the status of the profession' (Russell, 1980, p.280). Whether this conclusion is legitimate or not, it is clear that the growing number of female clerical professionals will have some bearing on the professional status of the occupation and the possibility of a gender threat to professional power must at least be acknowledged. As Hall notes:

The tide of women moving into well-established professions is unlikely to stop. The semi-professions will probably continue to be dominated by women. The consequences cannot be predicted with certainty, but it would appear to be deprofessionalization. It is also quite possible that as professions become more feminized, they will also become less elite and more egalitarian as the values expressed by most feminists are put into place (Hall, 1992, p.53)

The changing nature of the church, therefore, suggests a number of threats to the continued autonomy and power of the clerical profession. However, these have been compounded by the changing public perceptions of the professions generally.

### 3] public perceptions

Halmos claims 'the contemporary climate is radically and bitterly anti-professional'. He continues, 'the claim for a so called "service ethic" specific to the professionals is a sheer mystification of status claims and a device to silence the critics of monopoly, privilege, and power, to which the professionals are alleged to cling. The professionals are entrepreneurs and self-serving agents like everybody else...' (Halmos, 1973, p.6; see also Wilding, 1982, pp.85-128). With increasing economic pressures and demands for personal autonomy and 'empowerment' the traditional role and identity of the professional has been subject to increasing scrutiny and cynicism. Government policies have become more and more adversarial towards a number of professions and a series of steps have been taken to reduce professional power and monopolies. The professional is portrayed as a self-interested party trying to defend an illegitimate position and power, in spite of the interests of those he or she serves. Thus with the changing public perceptions of the professions many within the ordained ministry have become cautious about the designation of their occupation as a 'profession' and are reluctant to defend its position as such.

This has been reinforced by the fact that people have become more aware and cautious of the debilitating effects and dependence that professionalism may foster. It is argued that a form of dependence is encouraged by the professions which limits people's ability to function independently of the professional. 'The argument is that while initially people become dependent on the professions for specialist skills and services, gradually they become dependent on them for services which, in the past, individual citizens performed for themselves or for each other. The effect on individuals and communities is to narrow their range of capacities and to "disable" them' (Wilding, 1982, p.112). Thus the presence of a religious professional is viewed ambivalently, and seen potentially to be counter-productive to the growth of a shared and corporate ministry (Russell, 1980).

Moreover, Russell argues with this shift in public perception the clerical profession has found it hard not to be 'regarded as part of the powerful governing establishment in a society where most people are becoming increasingly powerless. There is a tendency in working-class areas to regard religion, like other professional services, exclusively as something which is done to and for the individual by professional personnel' (Russell, 1980, p.293).

This has also been accompanied by a growing awareness of the elitism that the clerical profession sustains. In general recruitment for the profession, as with most other professions, has been limited to a narrow band of well educated middle and upper middle class individuals. Thus the clergy tend to reflect the thought forms, opinions, and culture of the professional middle classes, which alienates them 'from the dominant social and cultural forces in contemporary society' (Campbell, 1986, p.42). Inevitably this reinforces the impression of the church as predominantly a social and cultural expression of the middle classes.

In view of these things, a growing number of people within the church and the ordained ministry itself feel that a professional designation and model of ministry is no longer appropriate (Bunting, 1990). When one also considers this in the light of the tension between the changing nature of the local church, with its lay aspirations and limited economic resources, and the professional nature of the ordained ministry, one can also see why it has been suggested that the clergy represent a profession in decline (Coxon, 1979; Russell, 1980). However, other factors must also be recognised which would resist this process of deprofessionalisation.

## **6.3 a profession in conflict**

Despite these various challenges, the establishment nature of the Church provides a powerful force for the continued professional designation of the clergy. As we have already seen, the position of the ordained ministry as a profession evolved out of Christendom, and so the relationship of Church and State is fundamental to the professional identity of the ordained ministry. Thus the continuing sanctioning by the State of the clerical profession through the institutional church is an important factor in its continued professional status and power. It gives social recognition to the role of the clergy as an officially sanctioned agency. This in turn acts as a paradigm for the authority of the position and role of the ordained ministry generally in other dissenting traditions. Thus the ordained minister is seen as a socially acceptable and sanctioned occupational role within the life of society. Unlike the leader of a cult, the power and influence that the ordained minister exercises in terms of his or her occupational sphere is socially approved and accepted. Yet this creates a tension in the occupational identity of the ordained ministry for the life of the local church and the changing expectations of ministry suggests a playing down of professional status, whereas the continuing



institutional nature of the church clearly sustains it. As Russell indicates in relation to the Church of England:

For historical reasons there is a tendency to regard the Church in institutional terms principally as a legal and constitutional entity. The Church of England is inter-related closely with the monarchy and the constitution and plays an important role in the civic life of the nation. Furthermore, all its activities at every level are prescribed within a legal framework. Yet from a different standpoint, the Church in contemporary society may be regarded as a voluntary associational organization, and as one of the many forms of organized leisure (Russell, 1980, p294).

However, Glasse argues that the conflict may be seen to be much more fundamental than simply that between the changing expectations of ministry and its historical patterns and sanctions (Glasse, 1964). He insists that the nature of the work itself requires a professional model of ministry, yet social forces within the church resist this. This leaves the occupational identity of the ordained ministry confused and without an effective working model, so undermining the morale and self-understanding of the clergy. As he rightly notes, 'The Protestant minister has motivation problems, career problems, and job-adjustment problems, not to mention financial problems and retirement problems' (Glasse, 1964, p.21).

Thus the critical problem for Glasse is not the ordained minister's '*ecclesiastical*' identity in the church, but his occupational identity in the world of work' (Glasse, 1964, p.11). He writes:

The minister must have an occupational image which allows for the uniqueness of the ministry while tracing its relationship to other occupations; which accounts for the whole process of recruitment, training, practice, continuing education, and sustained motivation; which illuminates at least some of the critical problems of church and ministry; and which can carry the theological implications of the more important traditional concepts and doctrines (Glasse, 1964, p.19).

The only effective model that does this is that of the professions. Professionalism provides a paradigm for the occupational identity of the clergy in a modern cultural and social setting and is 'functionally appropriate' to the task of the ordained ministry.

## professional necessity

Glasse sees the changing nature of society precipitating a new clerical professionalism. In his celebrated defence of clerical professionalisation, *Profession: Minister*, Glasse argues the complex forces at work in the division and specialisation of labour require that a new definition be given to clerical practice (Glasse, 1964). He believes the first step in the process of professionalisation is the 'self-limiting' of an occupation to a given area of society's needs (Glasse, 1964, p.115). This specialisation is an essential part of any professionalism. 'To be a professional in one area means precisely to be a layman in another area. [This is not an *ecclesiastical* distinction within the church; it is an *occupational* distinction in the world of work]' (Glasse, 1964, p.44). Thus he maintains the erosion of the historic functions of the clergy may be interpreted as part of a process of professionalisation. The loss of influence and areas of service within society can be seen as a process of self-limitation that requires the clergy identify 'those points at which the profession is to be practised, make clear what they profess to know, what they are able to do, through what institution, and to what end' (Glasse, 1964, p.44).

However, this understanding of the ordained ministry must evolve out of ministerial practice (Glasse, 1964, p.20). Only the praxis of ministry provides a sufficient criterion with which to avoid the abstraction of theological and historical models of ministry that fail to reflect the relative nature of the social context in which ministry exists. Thus Glasse stresses that an effective working model of ministry must begin with what the clergy actually do, and not with what they should do. 'It arises out of the work of the minister, not the thought of the professor' (Glasse, 1964, p.20). This involves a recognition that the work of ministry occurs in the world. Even though it may be directed towards, or set in, a religious community, it takes place within a wider social context. It has occupational characteristics that can be compared and identified with other forms of work in society, even though one may conclude from such a comparison that the work of the minister is distinct and unique from all other kinds of work. Glasse's defence of clerical professionalisation, therefore, begins by identifying the nature of the work that the ordained minister does.

In view of this, he argues there is a number of elements that are intrinsically part of and essential to clerical occupational identity. In order to accomplish the educative tasks of ministry, the clergy require considerable intellectual and communication skills. In the same way, the therapeutic tasks necessitate certain counselling skills as the

administrative tasks require organisational skills, and the sacramental tasks require an expertise and grasp of a particular ecclesiastical tradition. The work of the ordained ministry needs a knowledge of a number of disciplines, the mastering of a series of skills, and an acquaintance with a particular ecclesiastical tradition (Glasse, 1964, p.58; see also Niebhur, 1955, p.82). The ordained minister has to be an educated individual who has a comprehensive knowledge of the Christian faith in its historic and theological forms, who has mastered a series of skills through practice and reflection, and who applies these skills and learning in 'a historical social institution of which he is partly servant, partly master' (Glasse, 1964, p.38).

In the same way, the ordained ministry not only requires particular expertise and skills which assumes a type of formal training and education, it also necessitates a considerable degree of occupational autonomy and power. The work of the clergy takes them into positions of influence and trust. People are vulnerable in relation to the expertise and position that the clergy hold. Thus forms of occupational association and a code of ethics are essential in order to ensure that the trust invested in the clergy is not abused.

Glasse, therefore, concludes if one looks at the nature of the work involved and what it requires of the individual practitioner the most appropriate occupational model is that of the professional. The ordained ministry shares with the other professions education, skill, association with an institution, responsibility and dedication (Glasse, 1964, pp.28-44). A natural affinity exists between the ordained ministry and the profession not just because of historical association, but because of basic occupational characteristics and requirements. The educative, therapeutic, administrative and sacramental tasks of the clergy all benefit from and require 'the skills and emotional control derived from training and experience which characterises professional work in other contexts' (Campbell, 1985, p.27).

### **the case for clerical professionalisation**

If one accepts Glasse's analysis, then it could be argued that the work of the clergy necessitates professional values and commitments in at least four ways. Firstly, there needs to be some form of accreditation to ensure that the necessary skills and abilities are present and to check the suitability of the character. Secondly, professional ideals and training are necessary to protect individuals and groups from the abuses that a position of influence and trust like that of the clergy provides. The series of sex

scandals, the rise in personality based cults, and autocratic forms of leadership illustrate the type of abuses that may arise within a church context. Thirdly, professional skills and abilities would still appear to be needed in order to be effective in one's work. Alastair Campbell argues in order to ensure the appropriateness and efficiency of the care that is offered we are driven towards a professional definition of practitioner-client relations. If we do not embrace professionalism then the danger is that the commandment to love could become confused 'with sentimentality or with a limitless giving of self which denies our own needs', and fails to recognise the boundaries of the care that is offered (Campbell, 1985, p.1). Fourthly, in terms of mission and witness, with an increasing number of professionals in society and the local church, an educated and professional ministry has become an important element in ensuring the credibility of the church, and to a lesser extent Christianity itself.

In view of this, it can be suggested that social credibility, institutional and historical factors, and the demands of the work involved seem to require the adopting of a professional model of ministry, while forces from within the church and emerging patterns of ministry resist this. The increased power of the laity, combined with calls for the limiting of professional power, together with economic constraints, which re-enforces each of these other factors, make for a powerful challenge to the clerical profession and its autonomy. Yet the continued institutional aspects of clerical identity and the very nature of the work itself set in its social context, would seem to encourage and sustain the professional nature and status of the ordained ministry. However, if Glasse's analysis is correct and the work of the ordained ministry necessitates professional skills and status the deprofessionalisation of the clergy would not resolve this conflict, for there is a necessary relationship between the work undertaken and the professional nature of the ordained ministry.

The argument concerning the necessary link between the work of the clergy and professional values and commitments does deserve serious consideration. A number of occupations lay claim to occupational autonomy and professional status on the basis that it is essential to the nature of the work in which they are engaged. For instance, Freidson notes that in the medical profession occupational autonomy is seen to be fundamental to the clinical judgement of the practitioner (Freidson, 1968, p.25). Obviously these claims vary in legitimacy, from profession to profession. However, it cannot be denied that particular forms of work and expertise necessitates greater occupational autonomy, and by implication professionalism, than others.

For instance, Goode argues that it is the degree of autonomy that is required by an occupation in its work that determines its professional status. The crucial difference, he suggests between a profession and a 'semi-profession' 'is whether the substance of the task *requires* trust, and therefore *autonomy*, and therefore some cohesion through which the occupation can in fact impose ethical controls on its members' (Goode, 1969, p.301). Certain types of work demand particular forms of expertise to which the client group are particularly vulnerable. This necessitates that associations be formed and certain values be adopted in relation to the work that is done. Thus Goode argues, 'if we place the various professions along this continuum - the extent to which the client must allow the profession to know intimate and possibly damaging secrets about his life if the task is to be performed adequately - a fairly clear ranking emerges...'. Certainly it is difficult to conceive of ways in which the occupational autonomy and power of the clergy could be curtailed without seriously hindering the ability to do the work that is required.

However, even if one does not accept the necessary link between professional identity and the nature of the work that is undertaken, it is clear that the self-interests of the clerical occupation itself would resist any process of deprofessionalisation. In the same way, so would the various training mechanisms and colleges. Thus a number of writers have suggested that the issue which confronts the clerical profession is not whether the ordained ministry should be considered as a profession or not [an exercise determined entirely by one's definition of profession], but how it is to resolve the tension that is found in its occupational identity (Campbell, 1985). It is concerned with what response is appropriate, in the midst of the changing life of the church and society, to the problems raised by the necessity of clerical occupational autonomy and power. It asks in what ways may the ordained ministry be seen to be justifying its position in the face of the various challenges and what are the consequence of this? The problem of clerical professionalisation, therefore, can be seen to be concerned with the justification and legitimisation of the power and autonomy which the clerical profession gains and maintains as best it can.

## **6.4 sustaining clerical power and position in a secular society**

Dennis Campbell argues the process of clerical professionalisation is an attempt by the ordained ministry to legitimate its occupational position in terms of accepted secular values. The concern with 'competence, requirements for entry, rights and privileges'

that define the process of making ministry more 'professional' characterise the ordained ministry's attempt to move away from its traditional basis of authority founded on ethico-religious values (Campbell, 1983, p.24).

In Christendom the religious professional derived his authority and position from representation; he was Christ's and the Church's representative to others through whom the love of God was mediated (Campbell, 1982, p.62). The example of his life and calling were the basis of his credibility. Yet with the marginalising of the Christian Church and the loss of a theological frame of reference, the professions have turned from representation to the notion of professional standards and expertise (Glasse, 1964, p.46). It is the occupational competence and proficiency in a particular field of applied learning that legitimates professional power and position. Thus in the past character and vocation were at the centre of professional claims, whereas professional expertise and competence have come to replace these as the legitimating factors in professional practice.

Campbell argues that this is the heart of the problem of clerical professionalisation. In order to sustain a particular occupational identity and power the ordained ministry has had to embrace certain secular values. These values, that shape professional practice and identity, represent a 'functional rationalism' rather than a sense of religious vocation. They are an expression of the 'foundationalist epistemology' and philosophy which has come to dominate modern thinking from the eighteenth century onwards. Experimental science would, it was claimed, provide us with absolutely true explanations of the phenomena of nature, and thereby science would provide the opportunity to control nature - and society - completely. Such a foundationalist philosophy provided the natural sciences with an extraordinary legitimisation of power and authority at the expense of the power and authority of the Church. Therefore modern society has come to accept scientific knowledge and methodology (and not for example being called by God) as the principal basis of authority in the context of society and its problems (Jensen & Mooney, 1990, p.4).

However, in the medieval cultural synthesis, in which all of society was understood in relation to Christian theological categories, a professional was one who was called by God to render service to others. It was the distinctive 'vocational' nature of the professions that set them apart from other forms of occupation. The work in which they engaged was reportedly not for social or monetary advancement as in commerce, or the engaging in a discipline for its own sake as in the world of art and academia. It



was rather to fulfil a distinctive call, 'a divine initiative mediated by the Church', to serve others in a selfless way (Campbell, 1982, p.18). Thus the skills developed by the professions were understood as a response to a divine call. In order to serve others and truly profess the Christian message one needed to learn to heal, to teach, to legislate.

Campbell argues that, although professional ethics still reflect an element of their Christian heritage and aspects of the vocational nature of professional occupations are still to be seen, professional practice and identity are now governed by a completely different set of values. This he claims has created several problems for the clerical profession. Despite the fact that the ordained ministry provided the paradigm for the professions, it has become increasingly difficult to legitimate its position as such in a secular society. Thus the conflict between a Christian and a secular based structure of value is at the heart of the 'confusion about ordained ministry as a profession' (Campbell, 1983, p.24). However, the adopting of secular values in an attempt to defend and sustain its historic position as a profession has also created a number of problems.

Foremost amongst these is the fact that the vocational nature of the ordained ministry has been significantly weakened, creating a form of occupational identity that finds itself in conflict with the traditional values reflected in the clerical profession. Campbell maintains that although the ordained ministry has not completely abandoned the religious framework in which its occupational identity was once understood, it has been significantly influenced by contemporary trends and values in other professional occupations. He highlights in particular three areas:

### **careerism**

Campbell claims that with the loss of the religious frame of reference the professions have changed from a distinctive form of Christian service, to a basic form of employment. In the original conception of the professions and certainly throughout most of the eighteenth century in England, one engaged in a profession not as a means of livelihood, but as a calling in life (Russell, 1980). The idea of service took precedence over livelihood, and the notion of engaging in a professional occupation simply as a means of employment was deemed unacceptable. In contrast, popular notions of professionalism within today's society, defines the professional as one who has reached a proficiency in a particular skill so as to be able to exact payment for that skill (Moore, 1970, p.12).

The rationale for engaging in a profession is no longer seen to be a sense of divine call, but the prospect of a secure form of employment that provides sufficient income and job satisfaction. As Campbell argues, if one weakens or negates the idea of rendering service to others as a response to a divine call, it is a logical progression that such service should come to be accounted for in terms of pecuniary interests and individual self-fulfilment (Moore, 1970, p.13).

The consequences of this for the ordained ministry, according to Campbell, are quite subtle for the notion of vocation is still highly regarded in the recruitment of ministers. Yet in practice it has been undermined by a number of things. The increasing tendency for ministers to change careers and so no longer view ordained ministry as a life commitment he suggests is in part symptomatic of a shift from a vocational to an occupational orientation. He also claims that the introduction of fixed period contracts and job assessments has also weakened the distinctive understanding of ordained ministry as a vocation. And even some of the forms of ministerial recruitment reflect this growing tendency of encouraging people to think of ordained ministry as 'a career option'.

### **compartmentalism**

A second consequence of the shift of professional values is seen in the relationship between the 'private' and 'public' realms of the professional's life. Traditionally in the professions the character of the professional and the work done have been integral to one another, so much so, some sociologists have even identified this as one of the principal defining characteristics of a profession (see 5.2). This emphasis has its roots in the teaching of Christianity which does not allow for an easy separation of one's faith and one's work. 'Faith moves towards wholeness. The wholeness of the Christian faith brings together all aspects of life' (Campbell, 1982, p.36). In Christendom a physician was seen to practice in response to his or her prior and primary profession of faith. There was no discontinuity between one's work in the world and one's spiritual and personal life. However, this characteristic is in tension with many of the ideals of modern professionalism.

With a shift away from the religious framework of the professions, professional practice was no longer conditioned by an essential relationship between life and work. It was the expertise of the professional that was fundamental, and the altruistic and religious

motivation of the religious professional was re-interpreted in terms of 'disinterestedness'. The whole notion of a 'professional relationship' suggests a separation of the world of work and the private world of the individual (Goode, 1960).. A professional relationship is to be isolated from the value judgements of the individual's private life. The social contract that exists between the professional and the client is to be administered with impartiality and complete neutrality (Greenwood, 1966). The value judgements of the professional's personal life must be left outside of the world of work. A compartmentalism, therefore, arises which instead of encouraging the integration of personal values and the work in which the individual engages, separates the occupational and personal realms.

This creates a clear distinction between the world of work and non-work, that runs completely contrary to the original ethos of the professions. Again Campbell claims, as the vocational nature of the professions has weakened, the work of the professional no longer requires a response of the whole person, but simply necessitates a technical proficiency and a trust-worthiness in an occupational sphere (Campbell, 1983, p.27). A professional may be accruing debt, or committing adultery or hold sexist or racist views, but these have become matters of secondary importance for most professions, as long as they do not impinge on professional competency and the professional's relationship to his or her clients.

This separation of the private world of the individual and the world of work is alien to the religious professional. Christianity necessitates an integration of life and work, and the whole idea of a professional detached relationship is foreign to the life of the Church. Yet Campbell again suggests that this type of thinking is growing within the clerical profession as methods used in counselling encourage forms of detachment and the clergy are increasingly trying to separate their private lives from the world of work (Campbell, 1983, pp.27-28).

### **intellectual elitism.**

One further discernible consequence that Campbell suggests is the fostering of an intellectual elitism. When the notion of service was subordinated to technical competence this intellectualised the professions. The professional became primarily a person with particular intellectual abilities, able to verbalise feelings in a specialised language and apply theoretical categories to the situations he or she encountered in a specific occupational field. Thus 'entry to professions in modern times is determined to

a large extent by intellectual capacity, and the most common course of failure to attain professional status is lack of academic success, not lack of appropriate personal attributes' (Campbell, 1985, pp.44-45).

The implications of this are that the professions and the ordained ministry came to be almost exclusively drawn from a narrow band of educated middle class individuals. The secular values which have come to shape professional practice foster an exclusivity which encourages the middle class captivity of the profession. The values governing ministerial selection and accreditation and the requirements for ministry all reflect a strong middle class bias that excludes others that do not share the same academic values or thought processes.

The knowledge of the modern professional is seen to be set within 'a closed system'. Credibility is found not in pointing beyond oneself, but in acting as a reliable source of specialised knowledge and applying this in an objective manner. Yet in this the client group become vulnerable to the expertise of the professional. They approach the relationship with the professional in a state of ignorance, the knowledge and expertise of the professions granting the professional a particular power and position (Freidson, 1968) This reinforces the position of particular academic middle class groups at the expense of other groups within society. Thus the most serious implication of the influence of secular values on the clerical profession is that because of the changing structure of values seen in professional identity, a potential has been created for the clerical profession to become part of the oppressive social structures of modernity.

Modern professional values if embraced by the ordained ministry are in grave danger of perpetuating and sustaining the continued inequities of society as they ensure that powerful and responsible positions continue to be held by an academic elite who consign others permanently to positions of need. 'The group in society who are articulate, better educated, more accustomed to dealing with other professional groups as equals dominate the helping roles in the Church, while the simpler person struggling to cope with problems unknown to the middle-class group becomes the perpetual occupant of the client position' (Campbell, 1985, p.44).

Campbell, therefore, argues a tension is seen to exist between modern professional characteristics and the historical values and ideals of Christianity. The degree to which an occupational body is deemed professional is governed to a large extent by these basic secular values, while it is the tension that exists between these values and the

nature of the ordained ministry that is at the heart of the problem of clerical professionalisation. The ordained ministry in its attempt to legitimate its position as a profession in a modern secular society has begun to adopt values and ideals that are incompatible with the nature of Christianity. Thus the problem of clerical professionalisation is defined in terms of the relationship between the historic forms and values of Christianity and the secular values that may be seen to be influencing and shaping clerical occupational identity.

## **6.5 changing values and the clerical profession**

There are a number of issues that this perspective raises for the problem of clerical professionalisation. Firstly, it defines the problem of clerical professionalisation in relation to the need of the ordained ministry to legitimate itself in terms of the dominant values that shape occupational identity and practice in a secular society. Yet it also presents a fundamental dilemma of how to reconcile these values with the ethico-religious ideals of which the ordained ministry is an expression.

### **professional captivity**

Alastair Campbell in his work *Paid to Care* develops this theme further in the context of pastoral care (Campbell, 1985). He sees the problem in terms of a basic dilemma. In order to ensure an effective and competent form of pastoral care there is a need for professional values and practices, yet in this there is also a limiting, and even denial, of a truly Christian expression of care.

The conflict that Campbell sees between a professional relationship shaped in terms of secular values and the ideals of Christianity relates to what he describes as a 'loss of self-transcendence'. Professional values so shape the client-practitioner relationship that they limit the nature of the encounter in a particular way. This leads to a form of power that depersonalises and runs completely contrary to the nature of Christianity itself. As he notes, 'humility, insecurity and vulnerability are at the heart of pastoral care, if it is a following of the ministry of Jesus. It becomes hard to see how professional associations (described by British social scientist, Richard Titmuss, as "associations for spreading the gospel of self-importance") can cohabit with a care which knows none of the security of the socially successful' (Campbell, 1985, p.48).

Thus Campbell's thought implies that the adopting of secular values in the occupational identity of the religious practitioner inevitably negates the value commitments of Christianity itself. The values that he identifies behind contemporary professionalism are very much a reflection of what Halmos calls the 'counselling ideology'. This ideology 'is a mixture of Hippocratic and Christian principles, wedded to the more contemporary standards of intellectual honesty and scientific empiricism applied to human behaviour' (Halmos, 1970, p23).

Halmos believes that professionalism represents an alternative to the values found in religious and political approaches to social needs. It expresses three basic values found in the 'psychotherapeutic ideology' of the twentieth century: '(a) abandonment of judgement and condemnation coupled with humility and stoical acceptance, (b) cultivation of the mutually honest and intimate "I and Thou" relationship between man and man, and (c) the war on humbug, self-deception, false righteousness, angers or idolatries, and the correlate cultivation of clear-sightedness and truthfulness' (Halmos, 1970, p19). It, therefore, provides the professional with a secular frame of reference which does not have to turn to traditional political or religious sources for 'justification or moral replenishment', yet embraces some of the guiding principles of modernity (Halmos, 1970, p.28).

In view of this, professionalism is characterised by an individualistic focus and a resistance to political solutions to social problems. The professional is one who has taken on a very specific role and responsibility in relation to an individual, dealing with sensitive and personal issues. He or she is concerned with matters that relate to the social adjustment, development and fulfilment of individuals and invariably remains politically neutral, isolated from broader socio-political issues. The neutrality of the professions extends itself not only to clients, but also to the wider social and political context in which their work takes place.

However, MacIntyre argues that in these basic values 'the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relationships has been obliterated' (MacIntyre, 1983, p.24). This ideology reflects the belief that ultimate ends are outside of the remit of the professional. Thus means have become ends in themselves. Just as the manager 'treats ends as given' and 'outside his scope' and so concentrates wholly on technique and 'his effectiveness in transforming raw materials into final products', so it is with the therapeutic professional (MacIntyre, 1983, p.30).



The professional is solely concerned with technique and the application of his or her skills, 'with effectiveness in transforming neurotic symptoms into directed energy, maladjusted individuals into well-adjusted ones' (MacIntyre, 1983, p.30). The work of the professional takes place in a vacuum as no rational basis or consensus for the basic ends of social life and the life of the individual are to be identified. Thus the apolitical nature of the 'counselling ideology' represents a retreat by the professional into the realms in which rational agreement is possible: 'The realm of fact, the realm of means, the realm of measurable effectiveness' (MacIntyre, 1983, p.30).

MacIntyre claims the consequences of this is that professional relationships become manipulative and impersonal. The individual is subordinated to the effectiveness of the organisation or the application of professional specialised knowledge as no other ends are recognised other than effectiveness itself. If people must be manipulated in certain ways or controlled to ensure the effectiveness of the service that is given then this is an acceptable end, for it is impossible to distinguish moral ends. Power comes to be legitimated not in relation to moral categories, but in terms of efficiency and competence. Thus in the contemporary climate of the professions means have become ends in themselves.

This creates considerable difficulties for the clerical profession. If secular values which embrace a very different moral framework from that of Christianity are defining and shaping the nature of professionalism, how is the ordained ministry to legitimate its continued designation as a profession? A. Campbell suggests at least five ways in which it is difficult to reconcile the implications of a secular form of professionalism with the nature of Christianity.

### **1] lack of mutuality.**

According to A. Campbell, the essence of professional activity and relationship is that one seeks or provides a particular service based on a claim to a specific type of expertise and competence. The relationship is carefully controlled by the practitioner. By its very nature professionalism excludes the laity and creates occupational elites that exercise a power over others. Thus it 'limits the possibilities of mutual help in caring, creating by its very structure a division between helper and helped'. As A. Campbell notes:

The relationship is - and must be for the protection of both parties - one of inequality, in which the counsellor controls the situation with the client's agreement. This is the great strength of counselling, since it makes the services of one skilled person available to many without raising the unrealistic expectation that each encounter will be an act of personal friendship (Campbell, 1985, p.40).

However, this implicit elitism can work against the development of personal self-transcendence in both the practitioner and the client. Although the professional regulation of the relationship supposedly ensures the practitioner's impartiality and competence and protects against client dependence, it can also de-humanise the encounter. The practitioner relates to the client not as a complete human personality, but in a detached and depersonalised manner. The professional relationship is the application of an expertise in a purely objective and depersonalised manner, the applying of a scientific methodology to the realm of human relationships.

## **2] maldistribution of influence and power.**

This creates a further difficulty for the creation of occupational elites and grants a particular social position and influence that is protected at the expense of others. It occasions 'a conspiracy against the laity' (Prest, 1987, p.10). In sustaining those forces that negate human potential, it provides for the continued subordination and dependence of particular sections of the community. It acts as 'another device for ensuring that the "haves" continue to hold power over the "have-nots" and that the insights of the poor and lowly are lost' (Campbell, 1985, pp.44-45). Professionalisation, therefore, fails to provide a means by which to transcend the social and economic conditioning of social relations

## **3] intellectualism.**

This situation is further perpetrated by intellectualism. This reinforces the social inequalities that professionalism fosters and protects the elitist nature of particular occupations. Yet it also creates a very intellectualised and artificial perception of human relations. It fails to appreciate the existential nature of any human encounter. In its supposedly objective application of theoretical knowledge it sustains a relationship that is in some sense less than human. It encourages a compartmentalisation of human life that further alienates the individual from himself or herself, for 'the professional, however practical, however emotionally tuned, remains the one who...can verbalize

feelings and apply theoretical categories to the situations he or she encounters' (Campbell, 1985, p.45).

#### **4] neglect of communal dimensions**

A further consequence of these professional values is the implicit individualism it suggests. The professional relationship is concerned with the relationship that exists between the practitioner and the client. It does not in general address itself to the wider social issues and relationships that engage the individual's existence. As Campbell observes, 'The intensity of the one-to-one encounters of professional practice appears to create a blind spot in respect of the socio-political context of care' (1985, p.46). However without addressing these wider issues the potential of human life cannot be realised, for human life can only be truly understood in a moral and social context. If personal and social morality are isolated from professional concerns, with little interaction at the intellectual or the practical level, the work of the professional is again carried out in a vacuum that fails to address the whole person.

#### **5] resistance to radical social change.**

The logical outworking of these various elements is that professionalism is essentially conservative and 'change resistant'. It attempts to protect a particular social order and its specific monopoly and position within that order. In general, it does not address itself to the wider social and political issues, but regulates social change through providing 'apolitical' government agencies. Thus through adopting these essential values the professions become 'perpetuators of unjust systems and perservers of the status quo in an exploitive social order' (Halmos, 1973, pp.6-7). They come to interpret individual problems purely in terms of individual 'psychogenesis, or in terms of a geneticist or constitutionalist biology, and not in terms of alterable social structural factors' (Halmos, 1973, p.7).

#### **the end of professionalism?**

This then brings us to the second issue implicit in D. Campbell's perspective. This concerns how the ordained ministry is to sustain its distinctive ethico-religious values in the midst of a secular society. D. Campbell argues that the process of clerical professionalisation is a process by which the religious basis and ideals of clerical professionalism is undermined and replaced by a series of secular values. The problem

of clerical professionalisation, therefore, is that it creates a form and expression of ordained ministry that runs contrary to the basic values embodied in the Christian context out of which the professions evolved. It represents an embracing of cultural values and ideals that negates the message of Christianity.

The threat of clerical professionalisation for D. Campbell is concerned with the erosion of the ethico-religious basis of the occupational identity of the ordained ministry. The critical question for him is, how is the ordained ministry to sustain a distinctive set of values in its occupational identity and practice in the face of these secular values? For even if the ordained ministry leaves behind its professionalism and tries to find a completely new model for understanding its work, it is always implicated in, and to lesser or greater extent shaped by, the values within its social context. Thus even if one rejects a clerical professionalism, the question of the relationship between the secular values of modern society and the occupational identity of the clergy remains.

Hauerwas develops this problem further, yet he sees it affecting not only the ordained ministry, but the professions in general. He like D. Campbell believes that the essential nature of professionalism arose out of a moral and religious tradition which legitimated and defined the professions. He argues, specifically in relation to medicine, that it is a "moral art" and thus deserving of the designation "profession", because it reflects and embodies certain moral presuppositions and values. Yet he believes that the secular values that are now found to be shaping professional practice and ideals are seriously jeopardising this moral tradition. With the lack of moral consensus and the loss of ethico-religious ideals in society the professions have had to redefine their work in the light of a series of secular and pragmatic criteria. This has created a tension between professional ethics which still reflect the ethico-religious origins of the professions and the actual nature of professional practice.

According to Hauerwas, the values which guide the modern professional are concerned not with the 'private morality' of the individual, but the 'public morality' of modernity. This morality focuses on specific procedures that ensure the free and informed consent of individuals in the life of society, rather than on substantive moral convictions and commitments of a person or association. Thus the end to which all professional practice is directed is autonomy. This autonomy exists when an individual presented with adequate information about his or her situation, makes his or her own personal choice, free from any external coercion or interference (Jensen & Mooney, 1990, p.5; see also Engelhardt, 1986).

Yet as Jensen & Mooney point out the practical outworking of 'the principle of autonomy is that of the private market' (Jensen & Mooney, 1990, p.7). 'The informed rational consumer chooses on the demand side of the market and independently on the supply side, through the relevant price signals in the market, the producers respond to try to achieve an efficient solution to the rationing process' (Jensen & Mooney). Thus the values of consumerism replace those of traditional professional ethics.

The professions have become 'a group of highly trained technocrats waiting for their customers to determine what service they wish to have performed' (Hauerwas, 1986, p.13). As the moral basis of the professions has been eroded the professional relationship has become purely contractual. Such contracts act as a substitute for the lack of moral consensus and values in modern society. Yet, in terms of medicine, Hauerwas claims, 'when a relation between a physician and patient is construed as a contractual relation between autonomous individuals, the temptation to construe medical care in terms of capitalist notions of property becomes almost irresistible, corrupting physician and patient alike' (Hauerwas, 1986, p.5). The erosion of the ethico-religious basis of professionalism, therefore, imposes on the professions a series of secular values that distorts the nature of their work and commitment to others.

The issue this raises is whether it is possible to continue to speak of the professions in the way that I defined them. If the occupational autonomy and power of the professions is based on trust which is born out of a recognition of altruistic concern, then it is questionable whether such a relationship can continue to exist. It is inevitable that as the moral basis of the professions is eroded that the element of trust between practitioner and client will be reduced and this will have very real ramifications for the autonomy and power that an occupation is able to exercise.

Hauerwas argues that this is most clearly seen in terms of the knowledge of the professions. Professional ethics imply that it is not the infallibility of the professional and his or her knowledge that sustains the relationship, but a commitment to care and serve. The professional's pledge or 'covenant' with his or her client 'does not include a guarantee of errorless judgement, but is rather a pledge of steadfast presence and care' (Hauerwas, 1986, p.52). In a medical context this moral commitment implies an 'avowal of fallibility by physicians', for the physician comes not with a pledge of infallible esoteric knowledge, but with a pledge to care to the best of his or her ability and knowledge.

However, as professionalism is no longer seen as a moral art and the ethical basis of the relationship between physician and patient eroded, professionalism comes to be defined in contractual terms round a specific expertise, rather than in moral terms between practitioner and client (Freidson, 1970, p.370).

Thus Hauerwas maintains that a discernible shift has taken place in the values that shape professional practice in response to the changing nature of society. This shift has continued to secure the professional power and influence of the professions, yet it has also resulted in an erosion of the internal ethic of the professions and the traditional moral context in which they were once set. In view of this, Hauerwas believes that the challenge confronting modern professionalism is how to restore and sustain its moral foundations in the face of the secular values at work in society. For in the present situation there is a dichotomy between professional practice and ethics. Professional ethics which reflect the ethico-religious origins of the professions embody a commitment to care and serve, yet in reality professional practice is shaped by the values of consumerism.

In view of this, it could be argued that the greatest threat which confronts the clerical profession is not economic or from the laity, but from the erosion of ethico-religious values. It would seem that without a sufficient moral consensus in society to facilitate trust between the professional and those he or she serves, the basic condition for the occupational autonomy and power of the professions is removed. This results in professional relationships becoming increasingly adversarial in nature, subjecting the practitioner to consumer demands and the client to manipulation and exploitation.



## Conclusion

The problem of clerical professionalisation is concerned with the way in which the ordained ministry sustains its occupational autonomy and power in a secular society. It is a question of the way in which the clerical profession is to legitimate its position in the face of the various economic, social and ecclesiastical challenges that confront it. The heart of the difficulty is related to the loss of a religious source of value in the social structures and relations of society. Such a loss is seen to have affected the role and nature of occupational activity, changing completely the way in which work is perceived and its value determined. Thus the restructuring of society, and the secular ideals born out of this, sets occupational activity within a completely new frame of reference. This new frame of reference comes into conflict with the occupational values and ideals that continue to be rooted in an ethico-religious world-view. This has created the situation in which the ordained ministry if it is to continue to sustain its position and power as a profession must redefine the basis of its professional authority in terms of these secular values.

However, this process results in an erosion of the vocational and ethico-religious nature of the ordained ministry. The consequences of this are that the essential values and ideals of Christianity and the changing values within the church have become increasingly difficult to reconcile with clerical occupational identity. Moreover, clerical professional practice has become increasingly removed from the values and ideals to which it supposedly subscribes. Thus the religious professional has begun to reflect values and ideals which rather than facilitating the life of the church have become a hindrance to it. The challenge, therefore, is if we accept that clerical occupational identity is influenced and shaped by the dominant values within society, how is the ordained ministry to find a legitimate basis for its identity and power?

Part four

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# Kierkegaard and Clerical Professionalisation

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## Chapter Seven

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# Witness, profession and social change

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I suggested in the course of the last chapter, that the problem of clerical professionalisation concerns itself with the need of the ordained ministry to legitimate its occupational position and power in a secular society. Yet this is problematic in a number of ways. The erosion of ethico-religious values means that the ordained ministry must embrace a number of secular values to legitimate its power and autonomy. However, in so doing a tension is seen between the historic forms and values of Christianity and the secular values that are influencing and shaping clerical occupational identity.

In this chapter, I propose to look at how SK's thinking relates to this aspect of clerical professionalisation. I intend to argue that SK saw the ordained ministry as an elitist association that was sustained by socio-political power. As such, the Danish clergy, as they attempted to legitimate their power and position in society, reflected and embodied values which brought about an identification between the secular values of society and the ideals of Christianity. Yet for SK this problem was understood in the context of Christian witness and the influence that the ordained ministry exercises over patterns of social behaviour and social values. It is in relation to these ideas that I wish to examine SK's contribution to the question of clerical professionalisation.

### **the clerical profession and social relations**

As we saw in Chapter three, SK understood the changing nature of European society in terms of a loss of self-transcendence in social relations and structures, which created a crisis in religious and social authority. He maintained the basis of authority in society

was no longer to be found in an ethico-religious frame of reference, but was determined by a pragmatic and relativistic philosophy. Social relations had been substituted for divine. Therefore, the life of society had lost its transcendent moral and religious framework. Decisions were no longer taken on the basis of ethical criteria, but rather on the basis of what would appear expedient in relation to the social situation and context. Such decisions inevitably served the self-interested and egotistical structure of social relations, and undermined the worth and significance of the individual (TA, 1978; TC 1967),

In the case of the Danish clergy, although they made claims to an ethico-religious frame of reference and ideals, their practice betrayed them. In practice the position and authority of the ordained ministry was established not by ethical criteria, but the sanction of the State. Such a basis for the authority of the clergy affirmed that clerical practice was no longer governed by moral absolutes and the outworking of fundamental Christian truths, but rather by the pragmatic and relativistic structure of value in society (pap.xi 1 a 296 [4922]). SK was convinced that if clerical practice was truly governed by the ethico-religious ideals to which it lay claim, it could not be reconciled with the dominant socio-political values of the State. For Christ embodied values and ideals which challenged the self-interest and oppressive structures of society, and their socio-political sanctioning (pap.x 3 A 181[JP4040]).

SK, therefore, portrays an acute discrepancy between the ethico-religious ideals of the clerical profession and its actual practice. Clerical ethics affirmed the moral and religious assumptions and values that supposedly governed the life of the profession. Yet clerical practice derived its authority not from these ethics, but the State. This suggested a completely different set of values from those affirmed by the clergy. It implied a utilitarian and pragmatic philosophy that undermined the ethical basis of social life and affirmed power, status, and material gain as ends in themselves (AUC, 1968).

Moreover, SK believed that as the authority of the clergy was rooted in the self-interested structures of socio-political power, and not ethico-religious criteria as was claimed, the ordained ministry could not address the alienated and oppressive structures that enveloped human life. Instead of clerical authority pointing the way towards a solution, it had become part of the problem. The inequality, lack of mutuality, and the resistance to social change that were implicit in the nature of this authority all tended to sustain rather than address the problem of human self-alienation and loss of self-transcendence.

With the source of clerical authority being the State, rather than a series of ethico-religious values, the authority of the clergy pointed to and re-inforced the pragmatic and relativistic basis of social relations (AUC, 1968, p.44). It failed to draw on and bear witness to a moral and transcendent source of value. And so, it established clerical credibility in terms of the dominant socio-political values within society and in turn propagated these values in the life of that society. Thus the question of clerical authority and power and its legitimisation is understood in the context of Christian witness.

Several considerations, therefore, come out of this. Firstly, it is clear that SK believed that the values reflected in the occupational identity of the ordained ministry had implications for the values and ideals in the life of society. What the ordained ministry was seen to represent to others, provided a pattern that affected the way in which people perceived social realities and shaped the values which governed social relations and structures. Thus for SK the occupational identity and commitments of the clergy exercised an important influence and power over the social development of Danish society.

Secondly, SK was convinced that Danish clerical identity was not rooted in the ethico-religious and altruistic ideals to which it lay claim, but rather what he described as the 'secular' values that served self-interested and temporal ends. It was this notion that lay behind the *Attack*. SK believed that within the Danish Church socio-cultural norms and values had displaced the authentic ideals and expression of Christianity, negating the ability of the Church and its clergy to effect social change (see chapter 4). This meant that the Church and its witness in society rather than challenging the egotistic and self-interested structures of society had become party to them. Thus the pattern that the occupational identity and commitments of the ordained ministry provided in the life of society legitimated the self-interest within social structures and relations in the name of ethico-religious concern.

Thirdly, SK held out the belief that it was possible for the ordained ministry to provide a true 'profession'. That is to say, he believed that it was possible for the occupational identity and commitments of the clergy to truly reflect the ethico-religious values and ideals around which it was based.

Therefore, SK's thought suggests that the occupational identity and commitments of the ordained ministry may influence and shape the life of society and its social structures and relations in either one of two ways. It may provide a pattern that fails to embody the altruistic and religious ideals to which it lays claim, reflecting the socio-political interests of particular groups. This releases oppressive forces within the life of society as the clerical profession provides a moral justification for the self-interests of particular groups over the interests of others. The second provides for a genuine 'moral renewal' through the example of the clerical profession. It calls into question the self-interest of social structures and relations and provides a pattern and a challenge to the personal value commitments and orientation of the individual.

In the course of this chapter, I want to consider how these various elements in SK's thought are related to a contemporary understanding of the professions, looking specifically at three areas: 1] how are the professions thought to influence and shape the values that govern the life of society? 2] how are professions seen to use altruistic claims to protect and further enhance their own power, prestige and status? and 3] in what ways does SK's understanding of clerical witness differ from the way in which the professions are thought to regulate human egotism and self-interest?

## **7.1 professions and the regulation of social change.**

The principal category in SK's attack against Mynster and the Danish clergy was the 'Witness to the truth' (AUC, 1968). The 'Witness to the truth' was one who shaped the life and consciousness of society through specific actions and modes of behaviour (pap.xi 2 A 292 [JP4239]). SK saw this designation as particularly pertinent to the occupational identity and commitments of the clergy as they exercised a considerable influence and power over the social development of Danish society.

In the same way, contemporary analysis of the professions has recognised that they have an important role in the regulation of social change. The professional is able to define patterns of social behaviour in matters pertaining to their area of expertise and, as McKinlay has shown, even beyond this (McKinlay, 1973, pp.74-77). Hughes writes:

Professions also, perhaps more than other kinds of occupations, claim a legal, moral and intellectual mandate. Not merely do the practitioners, by virtue of gaining admission to a charmed circle of colleagues individually exercise the licence to do things others do not do, but collectively they presume to tell



society what is good or right for the individual and for society at large in some aspect of life. Indeed, they set the very terms in which people may think about this aspect of life (Hughes, 1955, p79).

The impact of the professions on the values and life of society has been commented on by a number of social commentators. Tawney saw professionalism as a powerful agency working against the destructive trends of individualism in society. The altruistic and service ideals by which the professions were shaped, provided an important regulating force in the social evolution of a capitalist and free market economy (Tawney, 1921). In a similar way, Carr-Saunders and Wilson maintained that professional associations 'engender modes of life, habits of thought and standards of judgement which render them centres of resistance to crude forces which threaten steady and peaceful evolution' in social relations and structures (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933). More recently, Halmos suggests that the professions give a pattern for a 'socially beneficial moral uniformity' that provides for the formation of social standards and interpretation of social realities in the face of social change (Halmos, 1970).

Obviously this power to shape the life of society is related in part to the growing influence and control that the professions have over an ever increasing range of activities. As government agencies and individuals have become more dependent on the operation of professional services and expertise, the power of the professions to shape the life of society has taken on an even greater significance (Wilding, 1982). As Titmuss notes, 'In the modern world, the professions are increasingly becoming the arbiters of our welfare fate; they are the key holders to equality of outcome; they help to determine the pattern of redistribution in social policy' (quoted by Wilding, 1982, p11). Yet the degree to which a profession is able to regulate social change in this way varies from profession to profession, and from situation to situation. Nevertheless the professions are seen to have a fundamental role, both at a moral and organisational level in the process of social development and change. As McKinlay stresses:

[It] is clear several dominant occupations [especially medicine and law] have come to occupy uniquely powerful positions in Western societies from which they monopolistically initiate, direct and regulate widespread social change. ...Other social categories, groups and interests - although possibly numerically stronger but less organised and powerful - clearly cannot initiate social change to anything like the same extent, nor in the same manner (McKinlay, 1973, p78).

## professional self-interest and social change

SK in looking at the significance of the Danish clerical profession in the shaping of the life of Denmark focuses primarily on exposing the self-interest involved and the implications this has for the nature of Christianity. The professionalism of the Danish Church is seen to embody the secular values of society that reflect the self-interested and alienated nature of the socio-political order. It is a professionalism that is no longer governed by ethico-religious concern, and as a consequence fosters oppressive and manipulative social structures and relations. This is not to say, that ethico-religious categories are not employed and used in the definition of ordained ministry, but that what is embodied reflects the self-interest of the clergy's true value-commitments.

Thus the occupational identity of the ordained ministry shapes society in a way that protects and further enhances its own power, prestige, and status. If any moral reform is suggested by it, it serves to further its own end, and so, the ordained ministry acts as a self-interested occupational body that shapes social relations and structures in order to further its own self-interests and power. Its capacity to effect social change is brought about through an ability to manipulate public perception and ideas, together with an unholy alliance of political and professional power.

Yet, at this point, there is a surprising correspondence between the *Attack* and several modern critiques of the professions. In particular, the work of McKinlay provides a series of helpful insights into SK's understanding of the significance of the Danish clerical profession and its significance in shaping social relations and structures. McKinlay, just as SK does in relation to the Danish clergy, maintains that the professions are self-interested occupational bodies that 'have come to occupy uniquely powerful positions in Western societies from which they monopolistically initiate, direct and regulate widespread social change' (McKinlay, 1973, p.79). This regulation of social change is accomplished in many ways, 'principal among them is the emergence of a mythology concerning professionalism.... a process by which professionals have become generalised wise men with an unprecedented degree of trust based on ill-founded claims to altruism (McKinlay, 1973, p.77).

### 1] Ideology

McKinlay claims that the power of the professions to shape society is rooted in their ability to manipulate public perception and ideas. The professions have so shaped social

consciousness that they can, quite legitimately, claim that they are simply responding to client requests and fulfilling widely accepted social needs. As he writes:

Many professionals seemingly agree that they now occupy a uniquely powerful social position, but quarrel over whether they deliberately engineered it claiming instead they are responding to client requests and wider social expectations engendered by the news and entertainment media. Such an apparent chicken and egg argument overlooks the possibility that professionals, and/or their representatives have considerable input into the very media which shapes information and expectations regarding their activities. The professional engineering of client expectations and requests may then be indirect-clients responding to already manipulated media (McKinlay, 1973, p78).

Yet at the heart of the ability to shape public consciousness is a supposed altruism and service orientation. The professions are commonly depicted as unlike other occupations in their selfless devotion to their clients and pursuit of some higher ideal. They are not only seen to possess a proficiency in the skills that they possess, but are believed to apply those skills in a self-less way. This is even despite the fact that 'a close examination of the self-interestedness of most of this change discloses the falsity of these professional claims to altruism, service orientation and trust' (McKinlay, 1973, p.78).

This notion of the professions is fundamental to their power to shape and regulate social change<sup>1</sup>. Without an element of trust the professional is unable to influence and control individuals and social realities. 'Unless he enjoys his clients' confidence, he may be denied access to the client's person, or to the full range of necessary but often covert information about the client while the client may not follow the professional's directives or counsel. Hence the professional cannot fulfil his responsibilities to the client or to his peers for the client's welfare, unless the client trusts him' (McKinlay, 1973, p.69). It is this element of trust that allows for the profession to exercise such a powerful influence in social relations. As Wilding points out, 'without trust, the power - and privileges - of the professionals would become unacceptable and many cherished freedoms would have to be reined in' (Wilding, 1982, p.77).

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<sup>1</sup> The great powers which professionals have over people could only be granted by government and gain general acceptance if the professions possessed public trust, corporately and individually. Belief in the professions' disinterested concern is basic to trust, and trust is quite crucial to the client-professional relationship.

The ability of the professions to regulate social change, therefore, is dependent on their power to sustain the perception of an altruistic and service orientation. This is done in a number of ways. Firstly, there is an 'insulation from external observability and evaluation' (McKinlay, 1973, p72). The less knowledgeable the client, the more absolute his trust must be. 'The more the client stands in awe of the professional, the greater his tendency to accede to any demand made upon him for revelations or compliance to professional direction' (McKinlay, 1973, p.70). Thus the ability to control others and regulate social change is related to the power of the profession to safeguard itself from external evaluation.

It is claimed that this insulation from lay observation and accountability is necessary because 'the public at large, lacking the requisite knowledge, are not in a position to understand the specialised procedures and activities, and therefore cannot properly evaluate them' (McKinlay, 1973, p.72). Such lay evaluations based on partial knowledge are even felt to be harmful and a threat to the proficiency of a profession. The 'secretive' and insular nature of professional behaviour is seen to enhance decision-making by removing the pressure to accommodate lay evaluations, allowing the occupational body to respond to purely rational and cognitive criteria.

Yet it cannot go unnoticed that because of this esoteric nature, trust becomes essential. As Wilding stresses, 'In economic relationships *caveat emptor* is a principle which retains a hint of realism. In professional relationships, given the expertise on one side and the client's ignorance on the other, given the stress that the professional deals with needs rather than desires, given the impossibility of predicting the outcome of certain kinds of intervention, a marked scepticism has to give way to trust' (Wilding, 1982, p.76).

McKinlay maintains this insulation then not only allows the professional to control the practitioner-client encounter, free from lay accountability - 'Perhaps there is more than a grain of truth in the saying the physicians are able to bury their mistakes' - , it also effectively obscures the manipulative and self-interested elements of the professions. (McKinlay, 1973, p.68).

A second important element in this carefully engineered social "myth of professional altruism" is the presence of professional codes of ethics and conduct. The public trust that allows for the professional regulation of social change is not only ensured through the esoteric nature of the professions, but also through the professionals' own

projected self-image. The professions claim not to exist for personal or collective profit or advantage, but to serve the needs of others and the wider community, such ideals enshrined in professional codes of conduct.

Yet whether this claim is legitimate or not - and McKinlay argues 'that codes of ethics are political counters constructed as much to serve as public evidence of professional intentions and ideals as to provide actual behavioural guidelines for practitioners' - it gives a powerful means by which to justify the power and social control that the professions enjoy (McKinlay, 1973, p77). This is why the visible abuse of a professional relationship is 'the ultimate professional sin, regarded much more seriously than incompetence' as it undermines the power of the professions in society which is dependent on trust and the acceptance of professional altruistic claims.

Thus McKinlay suggests that codes of practice and the esoteric nature of the professions provide powerful ideological tools that allow the professions to influence social realities. Such a professional ideology shapes society in that it ensures the continued existence of a professional elite, that excludes and subordinates the general public, protecting a particular social position and series of relationships.

## **2] Need**

However, the professions not only regulate social change by ensuring a particular social order and structure of social relations through professional ideology, they also suggest an interpretation of social reality itself. The professions control social change not only by the interpretation that they place on their own role, but also through the interpretation that they place on the world around them. McKinlay touches on this facet of the professions in terms of 'the manufacture of artificial need'. A person's need for a professional service is determined by how urgent he or she perceives his or her situation to be. 'The more he needs help, the more likely the client is to comply willingly with the professional's requests or orders' (McKinlay, 1970, p.70).

This creates a situation in which it is in the interests of professions to define as many as possible of the needs of society as requiring the attention of a professional. As McKinlay notes:

Such everyday matters as taxation and insurance, with their complexity, increasingly require the services of so called professionals. But the very complexity, which necessitates professional service, is due largely to the

acceptance by administrators of the advice of the professional groups which will benefit. In other instances [e.g. the purchase of real estate], a professional is required by law to perform a routine procedure, even though the recipient of this "service" may know everything there is to do and may even do a more competent job. The influence of professionals in such everyday areas of life is, of course, more insidious because they are usually overlooked until the particular service is required. A situation appears to be arising then, in which services of professionals which are not actively desired, or are regarded as unwarranted, are being imposed on the public (McKinlay, 1973, p.71).

Social change, therefore, is further regulated by the professions in that they shape particular social expectations that influence the structure of society. A need is created for professional services and the professions which in turn generates a process of professionalisation in social and occupational relations. Society is so shaped that it becomes dependent on the expertise of certain occupational bodies, their particular skills being seen as the only way in which to ensure a good or efficient service in relation to specific needs. Thus the defining of the nature of particular needs and relations in society allows for the professional manipulation of individuals and dictates that elements of social change are regulated by professional expectations.

### 3] Power

Both the above ways of regulating social change are to some extent indirect, in that the social order that arises from professional ideology is determined by the shaping of public perceptions. However, there is also a way in which the professions regulate social change that is much more direct. The professional, because of the public perception of the ends which he or she serves and the needs in society that he or she supposedly meets, is empowered by government and other social agencies to determine social policy and use of resources. Obviously the nature and extent of this empowerment varies from profession to profession, some professional bodies - such as, the medical profession - enjoying a far greater influence than others.

The basis of this empowerment is in part the supposed expertise of the professional body. With the 'altruistic, self-sacrificing mythology' espoused by the dominant professions, and their reported technical and professional competence, they provide an important resource to government agencies in terms of the implementation of social policy (McKinlay, 1973, p.74). As Hughes writes, 'Professions profess. They profess to know better than others the nature of certain matters, and to know better than their clients what ails them and their affairs. This is the essence of the professional idea and the professional claim' (Hughes, 1963, p.29).



Wilding notes several ways in which the professions have determined policy and effected the allocation of resources, especially within the medical profession. Concurring with Brown, who claims 'to a large extent the structure of the reorganised N.H.S. was modelled to the desires of the medical profession', Wilding argues that the medical profession sets the basic parameters for social policy in terms of health care (Wilding, 1982, p.27). This he suggests effects the process of social change in relation to medical provision within society in three definite ways.

Firstly, it ensures professional self-interests rather than public interests are the controlling factor over the provision of health care, as the geographical distribution of general practitioners illustrates. Secondly, this means that 'services are organised according to professional skills and ideas rather than according to client needs, to provider - rather than consumer - oriented services' (Wilding, 1982, p.25).

The policy of shutting cottage hospitals in favour of large general hospitals, illustrates this in that a very low priority is given to the convenience of the patient and his or her family, while the convenience of the consultant and administrative functions is given high priority. Thirdly, it also implies that 'professional elements and interests dominate decision making leading to biased unbalanced development' (Wilding, 1982, p.27). Again this is apparent in the fact that despite psychiatric or geriatric patients making up over half of all hospital patients most resources are directed towards the high technology bias of modern medicine. As Bosanquet comments, 'It is hard to escape the conclusion that in the name of "clinical freedom" a certain pattern of medical education is being maintained which fits very oddly against the pattern of need in the community. It would appear to reflect mainly the vested interests of particular groups of professionals' (quoted by Wilding, 1982, p.28)

This pattern of social control, of course, differs in relation to other professions. Yet these three characteristics do tend to be found in all professional regulation of social groups and agencies to a lesser or greater extent. However, what each profession has in common is that they each exercise a control over others. This may be legislated in different ways or determined by the power of the profession to allocate resources or services, or even simply in the claim to a particular expertise. In what ever way it is expressed, professions are able to directly regulate the process of social change by the power and influence that they directly exercise over people's lives.

Thus the conclusion McKinlay reaches is that, 'at least in terms of social change, the power and influence of several dominant occupations is approaching almost ruling class dimensions. Other social categories, groups and interests - although possibly numerically stronger but less organised and powerful - clearly cannot initiate social change to anything like the same extent, nor in the same manner' (McKinlay, 1973, p.78).

## **7.2 the 'Attack' and its understanding of the clerical profession's role in social change.**

McKinlay assumes that the nature of professionalism is not created by supposedly professional values that are embodied and reflected in the work of the professional. Rather it is a result of socio-political intervention that has granted the professions particular status and power. This conclusion is almost identical to that of SK in his critique of the Danish clergy (see AUC, 1968, pp.35-36)

SK in the *Attack* perceived the Danish clergy as a powerful occupational body that could direct and regulate social change. As was argued in the first part of the thesis, the very reason for the attack was SK's conviction that the social turmoil which Denmark and the rest of Western Europe was undergoing was directly related to the failure of clerical witness. The Danish clergy functioned as a government agency and as such enjoyed unrivalled powers in determining and administering social policy (AUC, 1968, pp.125-136). They completely controlled social welfare, education, and the religious institutions, yet they had failed to provide a positive force in the emerging social order. Instead of challenging the self-interestedness and oppressive social structures of modernity, they embraced and perpetrated such structures.

In his critique, SK wanted to reveal the 'mythology of professionalism' which justified and legitimated the self-interests of the clergy through claims to altruistic service. He set out to expose what the clergy actually represented did not correspond with the altruistic orientation suggested by the designation 'Witness to the truth'. Rather they were 'shopkeeper's souls clad in velvet'. As he writes:

**What I call optical illusion** - This consists in what looks as if it were serving a higher interest, the infinite, the idea, God; but upon closer inspection proves to be serving the finite, low things, profit. And it was this Bishop Mynster practised with rare virtuosity. ...So then, in the text: a religious longing - and

the note reads: Court preacher, four hundred dollars, prospect of the bishop's chair. However, the good natured populace notices nothing, is deeply touched by this religious longing....This is optical illusion (AUC, 1968, pp.275-276).

SK's contention was that the clergy was creating and sustaining an illusion - 'the illusion of Christendom'. The reason that this was done was in order to ensure the clergy's position and power in the life of society. It provided a means by which to look as if one was engaged in the service of one's fellow man, while in reality one was serving the interests of a socio-political elite.

## **Christendom**

This illusion of Christendom was created in a number of ways. It began with the notion that every person within Danish society was a Christian and a member of the Church. That is to say, the Danish clergy were able to define the needs of society in such a way as to ensure their own position and power. As SK observes, 'The "priest" is pecuniarily interested in having people call themselves Christians, for every person is in fact (through the State as intermediary) a contributing member, and at the same time contributes to the power of the clerical order' (AUC, 1968, p.84).

The clergy, therefore, defined the nature and needs of society in terms of Christendom in order to serve their own professional self-interests. Again as SK notes, 'What keeps up the illusion about a Christian nation is partly the universal indolence and love of ease which prefers to remain in the old ruts - but principally it is these 1000 self-interested men, among whom there is not a single one who is not pecuniarily interested in maintaining the illusion' (AUC, 1968, p.134). According to SK, the clergy were able to sustain the perceived need of the clerical profession in the life of society through various mechanism. They did it directly through the intervention of the State, and indirectly through the subtle shaping of social perceptions.

The State ensured the position and power of the clerical profession through legalisation that made the clergy the gatekeepers of social power and position. As SK writes:

That a man needs medical help is something which makes itself physically so understandable that the State does not need in this instance to help people to understand it. But when men are made religiously free, a person may have trouble enough in making clear to them their spiritual need. Here it is that the State helps - but no doubt very unchristianly. "What! you feel no need of Christianity? Perhaps you need to go to the Reformatory!" "What! You feel no need of Christianity? Then perhaps you feel a need of becoming nothing; for

unless you become a Christian all paths in society are closed to you!" Ah, that helped the priests' practice (AUC, 1968, pp.134-135).

Yet State sanctioning was also augmented by the shaping of public perceptions. Obviously this was not done through the media, but rather particular social and religious practices that re-enforced the impression of Christendom. For instance, SK in the *Attack* objects to the practice of infant baptism. Yet this was not on theological grounds, as SK defends the practice in itself, but because he believed it fostered an erroneous view of the religious state of the Danish people. For SK, the very existence of the priests, along with all their religious paraphernalia, created a 'plausibility structure' which sustained the illusion of Christendom:

We have what one might call a complete inventory of churches, bells, organs, benches, alms-boxes, foot warmers, tables, hearses, etc. But when Christianity does not exist, the existence of this inventory, so far from being Christianly considered an advantage, is far rather a peril, because it is so infinitely likely to give rise to a false impression and the false inference that when we have such a complete Christian inventory we must of course have Christianity, too. A statistician, for example, when he had assured himself of the existence of the Christian inventory, would think that he was thoroughly justified in putting into his statistics the statement that the Christian religion is the prevailing one in the land (AUC, 1968, p.30).

The Danish clergy, therefore, were seen by SK to be a self-interested occupational body that shaped the life of society in order to serve their own interests. They used political power to protect and sustain their monopoly over social and religious concerns and so ensure their own status and position. Moreover, they influenced public perceptions and defined the needs of society in such a way as to serve their own ends. Thus just as in McKinlay, SK believed the self-interests and influence of the Danish clerical profession acted as a powerful force in the shaping of social structure and relations. As SK himself argues, 'If the State got the notion of wanting to introduce the religion that the moon is made out of green cheese, and to that end were to arrange for 1000 livings for a man with family, steadily promoted, the consequence would be - if only the State held to its purpose -that after a few generations a statistician would be able to affirm that this religion [the moon is made out of green cheese] is the prevailing religion in the land'.

Yet for SK the most serious consequence of the notion of Christendom and the self-interested nature of the clerical profession was that it suppressed the true nature of Christianity as a force for social change. For SK Christianity is 'heterogeneous to this world', it stands in opposition to the self-interested and alienated nature of the socio-political order (AUC, 1968, p.136). It illicitly social change through bringing ethico-

religious ideals to bear on social structures and relations which regulate human egotism and self-interest of political and social elites. This for SK meant that the most important way that the clerical profession shaped social realities was through the ethico-religious ideals it was seen to embody.

Yet SK believed that this power to shape the life of society had been lost and replaced with a series of values that identified the interests of the socio-political order with those of Christianity. This influenced social realities in a very different way, for it removed the power of Christianity as a regulating force in social relations and structures. Moreover, as the clerical profession claimed to represent a true expression of altruistic service when they did not, they distorted the truth in relation to a genuine social ethic. In using ethico-religious claims to legitimate its self-interest and position, it redefines the true nature of altruistic service and re-enforces egotistic and negative patterns of behaviour and relationship in society. Thus it is not only in terms of the socio-political power that the clergy wielded or their ability to define social needs that SK sees the clerical profession influencing and regulating social change, but also in terms of the basic values and ideals that they are seen to represent to others. As SK writes:

A German author has said that the most honest class in the community are the shopkeeper, because they say plainly that it is profit they are after. I would propose a rather more complete scale of measurement: the most honest are the usurers, for they say plainly: here you are cheated. Next to them come the shopkeepers, and last would come the fantasy-production by Bishop Martensen, "The Witness to the Truth."...This signboard must be taken down. For example, it would occasion great confusion and disorder, nay, in many cases even serious harm, if one person or another were to take a fancy to put over his door the sign: Practising Physician, or were to hang out a red light. Social order must require all these signboards to be taken away. And so it is with having a signboard out as a Practising Witness to the truth. This is as though calculated to prevent the introduction of even the least bit of truth in the world; for people will say, "Where there are 1000 witnesses to the truth, it must indeed be a world of truth" - sure enough, if precisely these 1000 signboards were not the most dangerous falsehood in this world of truth (AUC, 1968, p.37).

## **ideals and social values**

A second force of social change, therefore, is seen within the clerical profession for SK apart from the socio-political power and position it exercises. That is, it acts as the representative of a particular ethico-religious tradition that influences social perceptions and affects the way that people relate to one and other.



In the *Attack*, SK makes it clear that he believes that social change is accomplished by way of ideals that are embodied in particular types of role model. Such ideals shape the nature and structure of social relations and the value commitments of individuals. As SK illustrates in the article entitled, 'That the ideals must be proclaimed - otherwise Christianity is falsified in its deepest root':

There is a proverb which says, "It's a poor soldier who does not hope to become a general".

So it should be; if there is to be life and enthusiasm in an army, this proverb ought to inspire all: a poor soldier who does not hope to become a general.

Rather different is that which experience teaches from generation to generation, that out of the prodigious mass of soldiers only a few even become non-commissioned officers, very few lieutenants, rarely several individuals become staff officers, very seldom by way of exception one becomes a general.

Now reverse the situation. One starts out with what experience teaches, what has been verified again and again from generation to generation - and thereupon one speaks thus: "It is foolishness for a soldier to cherish the notion of becoming a general. Be content with what you are, just as we are content, content with what experience teaches, that the thousands get no further". Is this not to demoralise the army?

So it is in the Christian sphere. Instead of proclaiming the ideals, they [the priests] educe what experience teaches, what the experience of all the centuries has taught, that the millions get no further than mediocrity.

Thus they apply Christianity *tranquillizingly*; a base priestly lie, but one which pays, applying Christianity *tranquillizingly*, whereas instead it is in its deepest sense *arousing, disquieting* (AUC, 1968, p262)!

However, the presence of these ideals is not thought of in terms of abstract moral or philosophical principles. Rather the ideal appears by way of example. That is to say, SK is concerned with the embodiment of ideals in particular forms of social behaviour and role. As such, the occupational identity of the ordained ministry is an important element in the shaping of social values and relations for what the ordained ministry represent to others affects social perceptions. The nature of the ordained ministry defines in the minds of people the relationship of Christianity to the socio-political order and influences how people view the existing values that govern the life of society. It communicates a series of values and notions about what are the essential concerns of the Christian faith and what ends the message of the gospel is directed towards.

Thus SK maintains social consciousness is influenced through particular modes of behaviour. For instance, if a brutal and violent murder takes place in society, SK believes this causes people to review their own values and to reassess what ends they are pursuing. In the same way, he very much sees a relationship between suffering and



witness, for in looking at those who suffer one is forced to re-evaluate one's own life and mortality. This same thought extends itself to what the ordained ministry represents in society. The way that the clergy acts and the values that seem to be implicit in what they do, influences how people think and perceive social realities, and so subsequently affects the nature of social relations. Yet SK claimed in his Danish context 'the existence of the "priest" has the significance of making society feel secure in its hypocrisy'. As he notes:

All the shrewdness of "man" seeks one thing: to be able to live without responsibility. The priest's significance for society ought to be to do everything to make every man eternally responsible for every hour he lives, even for the least thing he undertakes, for this is Christianity. But his significance for society is: to make hypocrisy feel secure, while society shoves responsibility away from itself upon the priest (AUC, 1968, p290).

SK stresses that with the loss of religious awareness in society self-interest and pragmatic concern becomes the over-riding consideration in social relations and structures. The purpose of Christian witness, therefore, is to alert people to the nature of human egotism and foster a sense of individual and moral accountability (AUC, 1968, pp.237-256). This sense of accountability rooted in an awareness that every man and woman will have to stand before God as an individual and give an account of his or her life. The end to which the witness of the clergy was to be directed was the 'Instant' - a moment in time in which the individual becomes aware of his or her moral accountability and obligation before God [the eternal] (AUC, 1968, pp.96, 280-281). The clergy were to act as representatives of specific ideals in the life of society that challenged human self-interests.

Without such a witness in society, SK insists moral accountability and obligation is increasingly removed from the everyday lives of people and self-interest becomes the governing principle, while an apathy descends over the populace (see Chapter three). Thus the role of the clergy in this regard is fundamental to the shaping of social realities. Yet this is not in terms of the ethico-religious ideas to which they supposedly adhere, but in the concrete actions which characterise their occupational identity. For the power of the clergy to regulate social structures and relations is found in the ethico-religious values that they are seen to embody by way of example.

It is in relation to this aspect of the clerical profession's influence on the life of society that SK's work is of particular significance. Obviously the socio-political power of the clergy to influence and shape social relations has decreased in modern society, yet the

ordained ministry may still continue to play an important role in the regulating and challenging of the self-interests within the socio-political order through its occupational identity and value commitments. This also relates to a number of studies of the professions which have seen them as the carriers of an implicit set of values that have a direct bearing on social structures and relations.

### **7.3 professions and social values**

In view of this, we can see that both SK and Durkheim share in a common definition of the problem that professionalism exists to confront - that is the destructive and oppressive nature of human self-interests. For Durkheim this self-interest took the form of 'the moral problems of an advanced, differentiated, and complex society, in which the economy had become somewhat detached from other social institutions' (Durkheim, 1992, p.xiii). It raised the question of how one is to contain the negative forces released into society by a purely unregulated market economy.

Yet to SK the problem of human egotism that concerned the clerical profession went beyond the bounds of occupational and economic self-interests. It touched not only on individual self-interest, but the self-interest that had been institutionalised in social structures and relations. Such structures whether economic, political, social or even religious sustained the self-alienation of the individual of which human egotism was a part. Thus the secular society was a society that hides God from others through its self-interested social structures and relations.

In view of this, the purpose of the clerical profession, as it was for Durkheim in relation to the professions as a whole, was to re-introduce a sense of self-transcendence into the midst of these patterns of social life. It was to awaken an awareness and obligation to social needs and interest that transcended those of the single individual. As Durkheim explains 'the more the society extends beyond the individual, the less can the individual sense within himself the social needs and the social interests he is bound to take into account' (Durkheim, 1992, p.16). It was in order to restore this sense of moral accountability and obligation to others that professionalism existed for Durkheim, and the clerical profession for SK.

Thus SK's *Attack*, not unlike the thought of Durkheim, can be seen to be born out of his conviction that the clerical profession has a role in society to foster moral structure through its occupational commitments and ideals. Such an assumption also corresponds in a number of ways with the thought of Paul Halmos who believes the professions primarily affect social change through providing a basis for the moral renewal of society.

### **Paul Halmos' 'personal service society' thesis**

Halmos argues that to account for the influence of the professions on social structure and relations purely in terms of occupational self-interests is to negate their significance as the custodians of a specific moral and ethical tradition that embodies values that are fundamental to the development of social life. The altruistic aspirations of the professions - even if these aspirations are infrequently shown, let alone lived up to - are of considerable significance in shaping the life of society as they embody the ideal and safeguard the notion of 'the equitable distribution of personal services' (Halmos, 1973, p.7).

Yet to completely dismiss the so called 'service-ethic' of the professions as a device to silence the critics of professional monopoly, privilege and power denies 'a potential of growth in the direction of its aspirations...no matter how haltingly or even hypocritically manifested' (Halmos, 1973, p7). Moreover, 'a critical and recklessly self-deprecating view about the compassionate and caring proclivities of man in general would make the radical's own moral status spurious', for if 'professionals are entrepreneurs and self-serving agents' this presumably includes 'their radical political critics who are more often than not academic professionals themselves' (Halmos, 1973, p.6).

Halmos' contention is that 'the personal service professions' are the carriers of a specific set of value commitments that provide a 'contemporary vehicle of integration in society and of moral renewal' (Halmos, 1970, p.57). Professionalism is an expression of what he calls the modern 'counselling ideology'. It is part of a process of 'de-politicalization of intellectuals' in the twentieth century, which provides a series of individualist and essentially apolitical solutions to a generation disillusioned by Utopian political ideals (Halmos, 1970, p.28). In this it carries a series of ethical values and assumptions about the significance of the individual and the nature of social relations.

Halmos argues that although one must accept and recognise that the interests and motives of the professions are not all that they should be, one cannot simply discount the social implications of the values and ideals to which they subscribe. As he writes, 'To deny the moral significance of the distinction between people who include in their occupational commitments the duty of caring for persons, and those who do not include in their occupational commitments such duties as these, is to write off the social effects of people's conscious and deliberate resolve to better the condition of man' (Halmos, 1973, p.8). The occupational commitments and the values of the professions are seen to perpetrate certain moral ideals which have a direct bearing on the values that govern the life of society.

### **1] moral aspirations**

Thus Halmos maintains the moral aspiration of the professions is an important social fact. It influences and defines the way people perceive social realities and gives a normative standard for social relations and services. 'The factualness of its presence' and 'the power of the advance imagery' that it brings to bear on the life of individual and social relations, changes social reality through providing an altruistic ideal in the life of society (Halmos. 1970, p.8). The moral aspiration of the professions the occupational identity and commitment of the professions 'exerts a pull on a reluctant and hesitant present', an 'upward thrusting effort' which 'even if it is a mere self-consoling "as if"' is capable of influencing social structures and relations (Halmos, 1973, p.8). Yet, in view of this, the moral values reflected in the professions provide an important regulating force as regards individual and occupational self-interests.

### **2] Socialisation**

Following Parsons and Durkheim, therefore, Halmos maintains the process of professionalisation performs an important function in socialising and channelling 'the privateering and potentially anarchical' aspiration of intellectuals into the service of others (Halmos, 1970, p28). It provides a means by which human self-interests may be channelled in a socially constructive way, as it functions as a form of social control which imposes a specific moral framework on human self-interests (Parsons, 1954, pp.34-49). As Parsons notes, 'the institutional pattern governing professional activity does not, in the same sense, sanction the pursuit of self-interests as the corresponding one does in the case of business' (Parsons, 1954, p39).

The professional person initially may be no less ambitious and self-seeking than those who are in other forms of occupation. Yet the institutional structure of professionalism forces him or her to learn to confine this self-interest to certain acceptable areas of competition and explicitly renounce competition in others. Moreover, an equity of service is enshrined as the professional practitioner is taught to resist the temptation to discriminate between clients on grounds which are not relevant to the discharge of professional duty. Thus professionalisation provides for the reconciliation of 'the anomalously contradictory standards of our culture, that is to say, standards which prescribe that we selfishly, self-assertively, and self-sufficiently prove our mettle by excelling in competition - at the same time - that we practise charity, fellowship, and render personal services' (Halmos, 1970, p.27). It gives an institutionalised form that provides a moral pattern in the life of society and regulates human self-interests.

### **3] personal appropriation**

However, Halmos takes this even further and claims that as the individual is constrained by the altruistic ideals in professional roles and relationships it actually changes the personal value commitments of the individual. Professionalisation not only brings a series of constraints to human self-interests, but actually causes a change in the values that govern and influence individual behaviour. The professional practitioner begins to take on the characteristics of the role that he or she is playing<sup>2</sup>. It is seen 'not only to protect the practitioners themselves and to afford them material advantages, nor merely to secure a competent service for the community, but also to inspire and confirm a sense of dedication and unselfishness in the professional worker' (Halmos, 1970, p.29).

Thus Halmos is suggesting a metamorphosis not unlike that found in the fairy-tale of the ugly man who hid his face behind a beautiful mask, only to find that after many years his face had taken on the characteristics of the mask. Despite the self-interest behind the altruistic orientation of the professions, the pattern of value-orientation they reflect will eventually be translated into individual behaviour and social commitments. The role will become the person. Through professionalisation people will truly come to be driven by motives and value-commitments other than 'the enlightened self-interest of economic and utilitarian theory' and as such holds out the potential of a 'moral renewal' in social structures and relations (Parsons, 1954, p36).

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<sup>2</sup> Halmos provides a prolonged discussion of how social role effects behaviour and value commitment in which he illustrates how this could take place (1970, pp.145-197).

Halmos argues that as professional values come to shape an increasing number of roles within society and the nature of political leadership, the altruistic value orientation of the personal service professions will be translated into the life of society. This will then provide a powerful force which will not only check the presence of human self-interests in social structures and relations, but actually allow for a more egalitarian and altruistic society. As he stresses, 'as an outcome of their growing numbers and social prestige as well as their participation in the actual leadership of society - the moral reformation of the professions brings with it the moral transformation of some influential leadership outside the personal service professions as well and, therefore, a major change in the moral climate of society as a whole' (Halmos, 1970, p25).

Three assumptions, therefore, can be seen in Halmos' thought. Firstly, the professions provide a social role model which carries and reflects a series of moral values. The occupational identity and commitment of the professions implies a particular world-view and perspective on the life of society. They express a series of basic value commitments in their work which are fundamental to their professional identity. Secondly, the very existence of such a role model shapes social perceptions, and so creates an ideal in the consciousness of society that influences social structures and relations. The fact that the idea of altruistic service exists in the occupational commitments of particular forms of work, although not always realised, is nevertheless significant for the way that people perceive social relations and structures. The definition that the professions bring to social relationships shapes the way that people relate to one another. And thirdly, as individuals act out socially prescribed forms of altruistic service, it actually brings about a change in the personal value commitments of the individuals, so allowing for a moral renewal of society as a whole.

### **the clerical profession, values and change**

There is a striking similarity between SK and the work of Halmos. Both accept that the professional identity of an occupation has a bearing on the values and ideals that govern the life of society. They also both maintain that one of the purposes that a profession may have is to regulate the self-interested nature of social relations and structures. Yet SK's thought in relation to the way in which the clerical profession affects social realities deviates significantly from that of Halmos.



In Halmos the professions act as the carriers of ethical ideals and values, although they may not actually embody them. It is the self-understanding that the professions have of their work and which they encourage in society that is the significant factor in the shaping of social consciousness and relations, rather than what the professions actually do. Yet in SK the presence of ethico-religious ideals in the occupational identity of the clergy is not thought of in terms of abstract moral or philosophical principles. SK insists ideals appear by way of example - role models. His concern is with the embodiment of ideals and values in particular forms of social behaviour and role. It is not with what the clergy claim concerning their work, but what the clergy are seen to do, that SK believes is critical in shaping social perceptions and relations.

Thus SK can be seen to maintain that values cannot be understood apart from concrete social situations and roles. Values are defined by paradigmatic examples of behaviour in the life of society. It is the concrete behaviour of an individual or group that generates values in society, for actions portray specific ends and define the worth of things. That is to say, the ethico-religious values and ideals of Christianity cannot be understood apart from the actions and lives of Christian believers. Only in acting out one's faith is that faith truly communicated and understood.

Nevertheless, SK does not completely disregard the ideological elements in clerical professional identity. Although SK assumes that actions speak louder than words and values cannot be understood apart from the behaviour of the individual or specific social roles, he also recognises that there is an ideological dimension. Values embodied in particular forms of action and role must be labelled. The reason why certain activities stand out as paradigmatic examples of value lies in the agency of the spokespersons who point them out as such. It is their repeated recommendation of these model activities as either good or evil that contributes to their status as a yardstick and their pursuit by others, and it is this process in part which changes an ideal into a social force capable of changing established practices and social structure.

### **MacIntyre's understanding of social values**

Alasdair MacIntyre develops these ideas found in SK further. He argues, 'A moral philosophy...characteristically presupposes a sociology' (MacIntyre, 1981, p.23). Moral ideals cannot be divorced from patterns of social behaviour. Behaviour embodies specific moral codes and assumptions that reflect particular ideals which in turn influence social development. Thus the embodiment of moral beliefs, doctrines and

theories in specific social patterns provides a moral frame of reference for the life of society as moral assumptions are recognised and communicated through such patterns. Just as in SK, therefore, social and moral values cannot be understood apart from concrete patterns of social behaviour.

Certain roles are seen to be labelled by society in particular ways which allow them to provide a moral framework. For instance, the manager is a socially recognisable role that carries with it certain value assumptions that allow people to interpret particular forms of social behaviour and to make specific evaluations. The pattern allows people to interpret what they mean when they subscribe and think of specific values, and it is the association between the role and the values in public consciousness which allows them to do this. Using a dramatic allusion, MacIntyre speaks of this in terms of moral "characters". In English medieval morality plays he points out that certain characters had been given roles which carried particular associations and were immediately recognisable to the audience. 'To understand them is to be provided with a means of interpreting the behaviour of actors who play them, just because similar understanding informs the intentions of the actors themselves; and other actors may define their parts with special reference to these central characters' (MacIntyre, 1981, p.27). That is to say, it is the association of specific values which are interpreted and understood in the light of particular roles that gives a *character* the ability to shape the social relations around him or her.

Therefore, particular roles in society are seen to interpret and mediate certain values within the life of society and public consciousness. They are 'the moral representatives of their culture and they are so because of the way in which moral and metaphysical ideas and theories assume through them an embodied existence in the social world' (MacIntyre, 1981, p.28). Thus values are understood in relation to certain roles, as certain roles have come to be associated with particular values in social consciousness. As MacIntyre notes, 'they are a very special type of social role which places a certain kind of moral constraint on the personality of those who inhabit them in a way in which many other roles do not' (MacIntyre, 1981, p.27).

Yet the implications of this are that 'the character morally legitimates a mode of social existence' (MacIntyre, 1981, p.29). Certain roles within society furnish people with a cultural and moral ideal as certain modes of behaviour are seen to reflect particular value commitments. The two are indistinguishable. Values are represented as a mode of social existence, so it is a prerequisite for the existence of such a moral representative

that the role embrace the existence of the individual. There must be a perceived correspondence between the value commitments of the individual and the social role. One cannot speak of values apart from the role that is embodied. A particular mode of behaviour, therefore, is always legitimated and understood in terms of certain social values.

However, this also means that certain roles provide an evaluative function in relation to others. They give a pattern or example that others are able to perceive in relation to their own basic social commitments. Thus certain roles in society are able to inform individual social commitments and to affect the way in which values are interpreted and worked out in social relations and structures. MacIntyre, therefore, suggests that the patterns that are provided for the life of society and the way that values are interpreted in relation to these values is 'socially crucial' because it is used to guide and to structure people's behaviour (MacIntyre, 1977, p.27).

### **example and aspiration**

Returning again to SK's thought we see that he stressed that the occupational identity of the Danish clergy hindered rather than aided the moral renewal of society. For he believed that the patterns of behaviour and values seen in the ordained ministry existed under the pretence of altruistic service. They equated a structure of value that is truly altruistic with modes of behaviour that embodied an institutionalised form of human egotism. In other words, in identifying a mechanism of occupational control that ensures the status, power, prestige, and income of the ordained ministry with a genuine Christian witness, the essential nature of an authentic ethic and Christianity is suppressed.

Christianity comes to be identified with patterns of behaviour and social values that are completely contrary to its essential nature. What Christianity is, is distorted by what it is equated with. Christianity rather than being seen as that which calls into question oppressive structures and stands in opposition to human egotism, comes to be understood in terms of a social force which sustains the socio-political order and ensures the interests of particularly powerful social groups. Therefore, for SK to label certain self-interested patterns of behaviour as altruistic and Christian is to distort the true nature of these terms.

Yet this differs quite significantly from Halmos. Halmos sees values as social aspiration which can be understood apart from actual patterns of behaviour. Values are ideals which exist in social consciousness, but are distinct from the social expressions that they take or are associated with. Thus the professions may represent altruistic ideals in the life of society, while not completely embodying such ideals.

However, SK's perspective would insist that the value commitments of the professional cannot be divorced from the actual role and nature of the professions. As he claims in relation to the Danish clergy, if an egotism is substituted for a true altruism in social structures and relations, this makes moral renewal impossible, for the clerical profession redefine the nature of morality in a way that does not allow for moral renewal. The ordained ministry create a situation in which the altruistic ideal is interpreted in terms of an artificial morality.

Halmos' thesis itself may be seen to be doing this in the light of MacIntyre's thought. The 'counselling ideology' that Halmos maintains is the basis of the new moral order that the professions usher in, MacIntyre would argue is a negative pattern of morality. He would suggest that it embodies 'the obliteration of the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations', and as such ends up purely concerned with efficiency, expertise and technique, quite unable to 'engage in moral discourse' (MacIntyre, 1981, p.30).

Yet Halmos fails to recognise that the moral ideals of which the professional is the carrier may eventually come to sustain oppressive and self-interested social structures. As M. Young has suggested the rise of professionals into positions of leadership may result in a professional-technocratic elite who because of the fusion of values and power 'would enjoy a more complete and a more secure authority than any ruling class' (quoted by Johnson, 1972, p16). SK's work, therefore, suggests that it is the example and not the aspirations of the professions that is fundamental to the regulation of human egotism and self-interest. For the professions define in what they are seen to do and the ends which they are seen to serve the nature of the altruistic ideals that they supposedly embody. Thus what Christianity is seen to represent in society is in part defined by the occupational commitments and identity that the clergy have.

## 7.4 The clerical profession and the regulation of human self-interests

The clergy are assumed by SK to be a significant force in shaping social relations and structures because of the way in which they define certain ethico-religious ideals within the life of society. Just as the professions in Halmos and Durkheim regulate human self-interests, so the clerical profession for SK is seen to have an important role in standing in opposition to and challenging the egotistic and oppressive forces at work in the social matrix. Yet in SK professionalism and the power and status that are implicit within it can also be a highly negative influence, and even reinforce egotistic structures and relations in the life of society. The reason for this is that although SK identifies with the basic assumptions found in Durkheim and Halmos' thought that suggests that the professions may act as the carriers of a distinctive set of moral and social values that regulate human self-interests in social relations, he also sees this worked out in a very different way. In particular three very noticeable differences can be seen.

### association and example

In Durkheim and Halmos an awareness and obligation of social needs and concerns which transcend those of the single individual is created through association, whereas for SK it comes by way of social examples that influences public consciousness. Self-interest in social relations is regulated for Durkheim through occupational associations. As he writes:

[Individuals] feel a mutual attraction, they seek out one another, they enter into relations with one another and form compacts and so, by degrees, become a limited group with recognizable features, within the general society. Now, once the group is formed, nothing can hinder an appropriate moral life from evolving, a life that will carry the mark of the special conditions that brought it into being. For it is not possible for men to live together and have constant dealings without getting a sense of this whole which they create by close association; they cannot help but adhere to this whole, be taken up with it and reckon it in their conduct. *Now this adherence to something that goes beyond the individual, and to the interests of the group he belongs to, is the very source of all moral activity....* It is this transcendent nature of morals that finds expression in popular concepts when we find them turning the fundamental principles of ethics into a law deriving from a divine source (Durkheim, 1992, pp.23-24).

A professional association, therefore, introduces a sense of self-transcendence and moral obligation into the life of society through the distinctive sense of belonging that it cultivates. It is the solidarity of the professional group safeguarded by its distinctive

organisational structures and requirements of entry that precipitates an ethical awareness. That is to say, the moral codes of the professions are simply an outward expression of fundamental principles that are inherent in the professional's consciousness through association (Durkheim, 1992, pp.28-29).

In contrast, SK sees the clerical profession regulating the egotism of social relations not through association, but example. The sense of self-transcendence that both SK and Durkheim saw as integral to the task of the professions for SK is communicated by the actions and behaviour of certain role models in the life of society. It is not as one becomes part of a particular association that self-interests are regulated, but as one is confronted with the true nature of human egotism through the action of others. For SK occupational associations simply substitute an individual for a corporate egotism. It is the self-interests of the group that come to be served and such self-interests may be far more destructive and oppressive for they are not regulated by a sense of individual responsibility (see 3.2).

SK assumed that in the final analysis all social institutions and relations are rooted in the egotistic nature of humanity. Social structures are simply an institutionalised expression of the egotistic tendencies of powerful socio-political elites or, as with modernity, the corporate egotism of the masses. The notion, therefore, that through a process of socialisation an individual could address the ethical self-alienation which characterised human life was for SK absurd. Self-interest was the governing principle in the life of society and society could not transcend this self-interest simply through association. This would only translate one form of human egotism into another which would then eventually come to be expressed in the corporate self-interests of certain social groups and elites. Thus SK assumed social structures and relations are always in some way oppressive and manipulative and further the self-alienation of the individual.

Therefore, in the light of his understanding of social realities, SK could see no basis for a truly altruistic ethic within the structures of society. If such an ethic was to be found it had to come from out with the social matrix. It had to look to the self-revelation of God in history. That is to say, SK believed that the only adequate basis on which a truly altruistic ethic could be grounded is an ethico-religious basis. Without this basis humanity is conditioned completely by socio-political realities and all supposed forms of morality are simply a reflection of some human self-interest. Thus association in itself cannot resolve the pervasive power of human egotism.



Such a conclusion was directly related to SK's Christology. The self-revelation of God in Christ went beyond any social construct. It transcended all social structures and relations and as such created the potential by which others could transcend such structures (see PF, 1944; CUP, 1944). Human egotism could only be truly addressed and regulated as individuals related themselves to the self-revelation of God in Christ and mediated this reality in society. It was only as the ordained ministry acted as the representative of Christ and his presence, and not simply by way of association that self-interest in social relations and structures could be addressed. Thus SK's thought proposes a distinction between a socio-political and an ethico-religious source and condition for human behaviour and morality.

### **social and universal ethics**

This then brings us to a second important distinction which relates to the understanding of morality itself. For Durkheim the morality that the professions brought to bear on the nature of human self-interests was a social construct, as opposed to the intrinsic moral laws found in human nature. The ethical constraints that a profession generated were a result of 'collective power' (Durkheim, 1992, p.7). They imposed an institutionalised pattern of behaviour onto individuals, and so regulated human self-interests through a form of institutionalised social control. As he writes:

[Professionalism provides] a code of rules that lays down for the individual what he should do so as not to damage collective interests and so as not to disorganise the society of which he forms a part....It is this discipline that curbs him, that marks the boundaries, that tells him what his relations with his associates should be, where illicit encroachments begin, and what he must pay in current dues towards the maintenance of the community. Since the precise function of this discipline is to confront the individual with aims that are not his own, that are beyond his grasp and exterior to him, the discipline seems to him - and in some ways is so in reality - as something exterior to himself and also dominating him (Durkheim, 1992, p.14-15).

This form of morality Durkheim contrasts with a universal ethics 'which arise solely from our intrinsic human nature or from the intrinsic human nature of those with whom we find ourselves in relation' (Durkheim, 1992, p.3). Yet for SK it was exactly this type of universal ethic which was involved in the regulation of human self-interests. It is an altruistic value orientation in the person that must be awakened in order to be reflected in social relations.

The way in which the clerical profession, therefore, is seen to regulate the forces of human egotism is not through the imposing of certain social or political structures on individuals, but through an example that awakens a consciousness of universal moral obligations rooted in a shared humanity (see 2.3). A fundamental tenet of SK's philosophy and belief was that human self-interest and alienation could not be resolved through political or social association. As we have seen, associations of interested parties would "simply mean replacing individual egotism with corporate egotism" (Durkheim, 1992, p.20). As corporate egotism came to be institutionalised in political and social structures, its social construction of morality would provide a legitimisation and justification of self-interests that further alienated and suppressed a true humanity. With an individual relating himself or herself to the "crowd", it implied a negation of the intrinsic ethical reality of human being, for people always escaped from their moral obligations and accountability into the crowd, the faceless persona of the public.

Therefore, SK assumed the 'moral renewal' of society must be precipitated from a personal change of value orientation in the social commitments of individuals through ethico-religious role models and not institutionalised structures. Yet SK did not completely neglect the institutional aspect of the regulation of social change, for he believed that the existing self-interested nature of social relations and institutions must be challenged in order to allow for this re-orientation of the individual. Thus the clerical professional occasions a moral transformation of society through questioning existing social structures and engaging the existence of others through a true 'profession' which makes others aware of their moral obligations.

### **conservative and radical**

This then brings us to a third distinction. The logical outworking of SK's thought is that if social institutions and structures reflect human self-interests and the role of the clergy is to challenge such interests, then the clergy must in some sense challenge the existing socio-political order. It is in so challenging the nature of social relations and structures that human egotism is regulated as the ordained ministry call attention to individual moral obligation and the oppressive and alienated nature of the existing order. Yet this stands in sharp contrast to the thought of Durkheim and Halmos.

For Durkheim the joining and mutual re-enforcement of political power and professional association is a natural progression. The professions regulate the destructive forces within society through a socialisation that ensures occupational activity "is permeated by ideas and needs other than individual ideas and needs". This provides an important source of social control that protects and sustains the existing social order. Thus as professional morality is a social construct, the moral stance of the professions can never be antagonistic to the existing socio-political order.

However, SK's position is very different. As the clerical profession embodies values that are not derived from the socio-political realm, but which are opposed to the self-interest in social institutions and relations, the clerical professional is in conflict with political and social structures. A basic tension marks the relationship between the ends served by government and other public institutions and the work of the professional. The State serves pragmatic and temporal ends, whereas the religious professional is concerned with moral and absolute ends expressed in the essential nature of humanity. For SK, if the ends towards which the State works are sanctioned and adopted by the religious professional, then there is a denial of the ethical values that are fundamental to a true professionalism which must always involve 'a witnessing to the truth'.

Therefore, in SK the regulation of human self-interest is seen to be characterised by moral renewal through example, a grounding in a universal ethic, and radicalism that challenges the values and ends of the existing socio-political order. He suggests the only sufficient basis for a professional ethic and moral renewal is an ethico-religious awareness that is found in human self-consciousness. Such awareness awakened only by the example of others as their actions and values, reflected in social commitments, stand in sharp contrast with the self-interests of a secular morality.

## Conclusion

The *Attack*, therefore, revisits the discussions of the role of the professions in regulating human egotism. SK concurs with Durkheim and Halmos in suggesting that the occupational identity of the professions, and in particular that of the ordained ministry, has an important role to play in the process of moral renewal. For SK the clerical profession is to embody values which challenge the self-interests of social relations and institutions and so provide a regulating effect on the life of society. As Halmos suggests, "professionalisation in the capitalist west inevitably introduces more and more collectivistic and other-regarding considerations into the social functioning of individuals, and weakens the *laissez faire* licence of a free enterprise, the *rapacity* of penal justice, the *harshness* of educational discipline and the *mercenariness* of "marketable" doctoring" (Halmos, 1970, pp.57-58).

However, SK proposes a distinctive understanding of the way in which this self-interest is to be regulated, focusing on the moral force of example rather than professional association. He also warns that professionalism itself may become implicated in, and an expression of, the egotism against which the clerical profession supposedly stands. This is epitomised in the clergy's embracing, rather than challenge, of the socio-political values that govern the life of society. Thus SK's view of professionalism suggests a much more radical perspective in relation to the clergy's occupational identity and role in the life of society.

Yet this returns again to the problem of the relationship of Christianity to Christendom. Christendom represents a socially constructed reality whose institutions and social structures can only be accounted for in terms of human egotism. The professional ethics of its clergy explained in the light of a consideration of status, power, prestige and income. Thus Christendom embodies those social structures that reflect the human need to manipulate and control others for one's own advantage, whether social or political. Christianity on the other hand, represents something which transcends such human interests and social structures. It is grounded not in socio-political, but ethico-religious categories that cannot be accounted for purely in terms of social structures. It concerns the self-revelation of God in history and his moral imprint which is not a social construct alone.

## Chapter Eight

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# An alternative professionalism

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The nature of Christian witness for SK was to provide a challenge to the existing socio-political order and to call people to a mutual recognition of their moral responsibility and obligations towards others. The occupational commitments and identity of the ordained ministry was a fundamental element in this witness. This defined and acted as source of ethico-religious value in the life of society which influenced social relations and structures, checking human self-interests and regulating the oppressive nature of the socio-political forces in society. However, SK was also aware of how the nature of this witness could be distorted through the values that the clergy embraced and what they came to stand for. In the context in which he wrote, he was convinced the ordained ministry was implicated in the self-interested social and political forces at work in society, its occupational identity conditioned by the values of a secular age. Thus an important element in his thinking was the question of how is one to restore an authentic witness in relation to the occupational commitments and identity of the clergy in a secular age. It is with this question that this chapter is concerned.

### clerical professionalism and its moral ambiguity

Alastair Campbell in his work *Paid to Care* (Campbell, 1985) argues that the professional nature of pastoral activity creates a potential obstacle to the true nature of the Christian Gospel, yet he also recognises that one cannot simply dismiss professionalism. As he writes:

Pastoral care seems to be a kind of friendship, an offer of a loving relationship. Yet friendship seems too weak a word to convey the difficulties we encounter in trying to mediate love to those who are deeply estranged from it. Some kind of consistency and skill is required in order to move from our natural aptitude for sympathy to the arduous task of genuine care and to the transformation of

our society. Perhaps pastoral care has to be a kind of professional activity, like psychotherapy or casework or depth counselling. Yet, there may be a danger that, if we professionalize pastoral care, we will lose the spontaneity and the simplicity which characterises love....Yet the naiveté of those who try to put love into practice without the discipline of training is also obvious (Campbell, 1985, p4).

Professionalism for Campbell is found in the midst of the fallen world as people endeavour to break free of the fragmentary and erratic nature of sin. 'The reality and persuasiveness of sin' creates the need for a disciplined and formalised form of care that resists the self-interested and destructive influences that can disrupt human relationships (Campbell, 1985, p.53). However, he also recognises that although professionalism may be necessary to regulate human self-interest, it also presents a potential danger in relation to Christianity where professionalism may become a secular substitute for genuine relationship and care.

In SK a similar dilemma is recognised. The *Attack* is written with the assumption that we can never remove ourselves from the conditioning of our socio-political and cultural context. It recognises the compromised nature of the structure of social relations and the egotism of the human spirit. It is suspicious and completely rejects any notion that one could create a Utopian ideal that perfectly expresses the essence of Christianity in a fallen world (AUC, 1968, p.28).

SK was not an advocate of a return to an idealised New Testament Christianity and pattern of ministry. On the contrary, he condemned many of the sectarian elements in Danish society that suggested that they had recovered the Christianity of the New Testament. For SK such a claim was a self-delusion. It fell into the same trap as the Danish Establishment in its illusion of Christendom which equated its compromised and socially conditioned expression of Christianity with that of the New Testament. These groups in believing that their expression of Christianity truly embodied the ideals of Christ removed the penitent nature of Christian experience that confronts the daily reality of not being what one should, a sense out of which for SK came all progression in the Christian life.

Thus SK's thought evolved out of, and around, the tension between Christian ideals and the social and existential realities of human existence. He had an acute awareness of the tension between the nature of Christianity, with its vision of a redeemed humanity, and the fallen nature of human life and social structure and relations. In his writings, we find an intensive struggle with these realities and what it means to work out Christian



salvation in their midst. Therefore, the question for SK was not whether one could find a pure and authentic model of ministry, but how in the midst of the fallen structures of society, in which the clergy are implicated, we are to foster a genuine Christian witness.

## **8.1 professional authority**

The answer to this question was for SK related to the way in which the clergy are seen to legitimate their position and power. SK was convinced that the source from which the clergy derive their authority is an integral part of Christian witness. If the power and position of the clergy is seen to be rooted in a socio-political source, then what they represent in society is a reflection of the basic socio-political values of the dominant intellectual and social elites. Yet such values would always be an expression of the self-interests within the social matrix and serve egotistic ends. It would imply a negation of the basic Christian gospels and its ideals. As he writes:

The people, as was said, live and breathe in the thought that what is royally authorized is something more, more than what is royally authorized. Then the people apply the notion to this instance also, have more respect for a royally authorized teacher of Christianity than for one who is not that, and then again with regard to the royally authorized teachers they have more respect in proportion as they are distinguished by the State, have higher rank, more orders of knighthood, bigger incomes.

What a fundamental confusion! In the same sense as one speaks of murdering a language, this is murdering Christianity turning it round about, standing it on its head, or in a polite fashion snuffing it out (AUC, 1968, pp.132-133)

Thus for SK the nature of the occupational identity of the clergy and its authority bore witness to the values reflected in the society around them, rather than the ethico-religious ideals to which they supposedly subscribed. The fact that the power and position of the Danish Church was sustained by the State was a direct reflection on the nature of Christianity.

The challenge, therefore, was to find an appropriate source by which to legitimate the occupational autonomy and power of the clergy, and it was to the self-revelation of God in Christ that SK turned. It is the imitation of Christ that must act as the source of all clerical professional values and authority. Only in such imitation does the 'Witness to the truth' find the authority that is appropriate to the work of the religious professional.

For if the source of religious authority and credibility is found out with this imitation of Christ, then the ethico-religious values and ideals that are an integral part of the occupational identity of the ordained ministry simply become ideological tools with which to protect and sustain the illegitimate interests and power of the profession. What is expressed in the identity of the clergy is not Christian witness, but a religious authorisation of the socio-political values of a secular age.

Thus the authority and power of the clergy is directly related to the ethico-religious ideals that they are seen to express and embody. However, the evidence that the occupational identity of the ordained ministry is rooted in such a tradition is illustrated by the relationship of the clergy to the socio-political order. If the position and power of the clergy is found through the distinctive ethico-religious tradition and values within the Christian religion, then this implies a relationship that calls into question the existing socio-political structures of the social order, for 'Christianity is the antithesis of the kingdoms of this world, is heterogeneous' (AUC, 1968, p.133). If this relationship does not exist and the values which are reflected by the clergy do not challenge the existing order, then no matter the ethico-religious justification of their position, the source of clerical authority is to be found in the dominant socio-political values of the time.

### **structures of professional authority**

A fuller understanding of the nature of this form of ethico-religious authority can be understood if we look at Heraud's analysis of various forms of professional authority. Heraud argues the nature of professional authority is not a uniform phenomenon, but is interpreted and sustained through a number of means. This in part accounts for the difficulty in defining the nature of professionalism and its essential characteristics. Each profession develops a distinctive ideology and self-understanding that justifies its professional identity and authority in the response to challenges that are made on it (Heraud, 1973). There are clearly some elements that are held in common; however historical, contextual and institutionalised resistance to change means that there are considerable differences.

Professional bodies, therefore, legitimate their position and authority in different ways. Looking specifically at the political and administrative challenges to the professional nature of social work in the 1970's, Heraud suggest four different strategies that are potentially employed by professional groups to safeguard their position and influence.

Yet each of these has very different consequences for the nature of the role of the profession in society.

### **1] traditionalist structure**

The first of these strategies employs what Heraud calls a 'traditionalist response'. This strategy defends professional authority against the social, administrative and political forces that would undermine it by insisting on the essential role that the professions play in the functioning of society. Without the professions and their authority, it suggests, areas of expertise and standards of service would be undermined. The effective outworking of particular expertise necessitates an occupational autonomy, free from lay or administrative interference. There is a fundamental need for professional associations to exist and occupational autonomy to be given to ensure such services. Thus the implication is that if professional authority is questioned or regulated, it would hinder the professions in their work and undermine the standard of service. The authority of the professions is a necessary prerequisite to the function that they serve in society.

The expertise and skill of the professional, therefore, is used to legitimate professional authority. In such a situation, Heraud notes 'the authority of the established professional is...seen as inviolable' and the status aspect of a profession 'receives considerable approval'. The values on which professional authority is based serve an essentially conservative end, 'where the function is to maintain the culture and to induct new entrants into the mores of practice and custom' (Heraud, 1973, p93).

### **2] therapeutic structure**

A second strategy is the 'realist therapeutic' response. This suggests that the authority of the professional is based on the representative function that they serve. The professional acts as the ambassador of health, educational, legal and moral concerns and the social values that are implicit in these areas. Professional authority, therefore, is seen to be derived directly from the state and the role that it has assigned to the professional. In a free, democratic society the professional is intended to enhance or make available the choices and decisions open to the individual within the dominant value system. They direct and control the lives of others on the basis that they 'pursue goods which are generally accepted as legitimate' and desirable socio-political ends.

However, as Heraud notes, professional authority justified in such terms always implies a particular political structure that defines the values and sanctions the professional in his or her role. It provides a powerful strategy with which to resist any attempt to undermine professional authority and standing for it employs legal and political sanction. Yet the role of the professional is to represent specific socio-political values and to help those that are 'severally socially maladjusted' to come to terms with this reality. The justification of professional authority in these terms means that in less democratic situations the professional may be seen to function far more blatantly as part of a political ideology, for instance, in the medical practitioner's sanctioning of political dissidents within mental hospitals in what was the Soviet Union.

### **3] reformist structure**

This approach suggests that professional authority is derived from the interests of the individuals that are served. The professional is employed by a client to represent his or her interests. In order for the professional to serve those interests fully he or she requires a particular type of occupational autonomy and authority in society. The professional does not simply fulfil specific tasks and meet particular needs within society, but provides for the improvement and transformation of the individual's life within the social order. They enable and empower. Heraud notes that if this view of professional authority is applied to social work, then 'the provision of physical services and resources and the representation of the individual and family in the struggle to obtain resources...and not the practice of individual casework becomes paramount' (Heraud, 1973, p95).

Professional authority, therefore, is granted as the professional provides an interface between the changing nature of knowledge and social services and the life of the individual. This enables the professional to function as an arbiter of social progress and exercise power over specific fields and individuals as the ability to adapt and embrace emerging social and cognitive trends, together with the interests of the individual, provides a basis for professional authority. Thus it embraces the values of consumerism, while continuing to hold to a service ethic.

#### **4] revolutionary structure**

This suggests that professional authority is to be found and rooted not in the sustaining or embracing of the present social order, or individual interests, but in a moral framework that challenges existing socio-political values. It holds that professional practice deals with issues that are fundamentally political and moral and implies particular political and moral assumptions. The authority of the professional is based on acting as a representative of a set of particular ethical values and ideals which at times may conflict with the utilitarian values of social life. The professional's role is to present and defend these values in the life of society, not simply defending the rights of particular individuals, but ensuring that the rights of all are protected. Thus in response to the challenges made on professional authority this approach looks to a moral justification for the role and power of the professions in the regulating of social change.

Heraud argues that in terms of social work this response can be seen in a number of political ideologies that have come to inform particular practices. As he writes:

The sources of repression in capitalist society is seen as based primarily on class system and on class domination and repression [or 'surplus' repression] and will disappear when that class system is abolished. Therapists such as social workers are helping people to come to terms with such a repressive society and as such are counter-revolutionary forces. For social work to achieve its aim of contributing to satisfactory human development and human freedom social workers must become involved in the revolutionary struggle and social workers become revolutionaries....An illustration of such an approach is that of the action taken by some social workers in the London borough of Islington in allying themselves with residents and squatters in order to challenge the Council to change their housing policy in the area and to draw attention to the national failure to provide adequate housing accommodation (Heraud, 1973, p.95).

Each of these responses ensures the continued influence and power of the professions in the life of society and the individual and protect professional autonomy. Yet there consequences are quite different and the values that are seen to be perpetrated by these rationales for professional authority are very distinctive.

## **8.2 professional authority and the ordained ministry**

In view of this, SK's work could be seen to contrast two of these types of professional strategies - therapeutic and revolutionary - and their consequences in Danish society. The professional authority of the Danish clergy is seen predominately in terms of a

'therapeutic' rationale; what SK calls 'immanent authority' (pap.viii I A 416 [183]). The clergy are employed in the service of the State and the values from which their authority is derived is rooted very much in the socio-political matrix. This form of professional authority becomes oppressive and further alienates the individual.

On the other hand, SK would appear to suggest that clerical authority should function much more in terms of Heraud's 'revolutionary model'. Professional authority must derive its power and influence from a particular set of professional ethics that challenge existing values and in so doing influence and regulate the process of social change. Therefore, SK believed that the key to the dilemma of clerical professionalism lay in the moral context within which such professionalism was expressed. If professional authority was seen to be rooted in a moral commitment that required of the practitioner moral example, identification, and vulnerability, then the structures of professionalism that foster elites and distinctive forms of power would find their negative elements contained. That is to say, for SK the issue was whether the ordained ministry found its source of authority in external social structures and relations or whether it was rooted in the basic disciplines and commitments of the religious practitioner.

### **religious conviction and professional authority**

A similar solution to the problem of clerical professionalisation is also found in the work of A. Campbell. Returning to the root meaning of professional - '*professio*, a public declaration of intent' - he maintains that it is possible to define the nature of professionalism in terms of the basic value commitments of the practitioner (Campbell, 1985, p.48). As he writes:

To reject a particular form of professionalism does not imply that the knowledge, skill, responsibility and commitment associated with professionalism should be totally swept aside. To the extent that professionalism is more than merely a monopolistic claim to status and power, its public declaration of intent is based upon serious and verifiable efforts to provide consistent and effective service to others. The professed intent of the Christian community is to love one another and to promote the gospel of love throughout the world. A pastoral care which seeks to honour this intent must demonstrate the seriousness of its commitment....[Thus] all those features which make professionalism a *genuine* claim to efficacy are required by a pastoral care which means what it says. Declarations of intent and exhortations to love are of no use if they are not implemented in quite specific, practical and consistent ways of acting (Campbell, 1985, p55).



It is not wrong that particular forms of expertise should exist or that occupational autonomy and power should be given to particular occupational bodies as long as these things are not seen or expressed as ends in themselves. In fact, the desire to serve others will always seek a more effective and disciplined form of care. Yet if expertise or autonomy and power become ends in themselves, devoid of ethical concern and commitment on the part of the practitioner, professionalism becomes a negative force. Thus it is only as professionalism evolves out of the value commitments of the individual practitioner that a true professionalism appears.

The implication of this in relation to the professional nature of pastoral care is that it engages the whole of the Christian community, for 'it is through the heightening of the capacity to know and to express love that the Christian becomes a "professional" in pastoral care' (Campbell, 1985, p.60). It evolves out of the life of the believing community and the basic shared commitments of the Christian community. Thus in this sense the whole of the Christian community engages in a form of professional commitment. As he writes:

Christians cannot claim to have any expertise in love or any final knowledge of its mysterious power to heal and save. But they are the ones who "turn again", who recognise the fragmentation of physical desire, friendship and an all-embracing love within themselves, and who seek God's help to give to others what they alone cannot give. In this determined and disciplined "turning again" lies the professionalism of all pastoral care (Campbell, 1985, p.58).

As the basis of professionalism is not expertise, knowledge or socio-political power, but the shared commitment of the life of the whole Church as a witnessing, loving and serving community it exists as a potential within all Christians. Thus it is very different from that which is found within any other professional group for it appears as part of the life of the whole Church in witness [*kerygma*], fellowship [*koinonia*] and service [*diakonia*] (Campbell, 1985, p60)<sup>1</sup>. Clerical professional authority, therefore, is seen to

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<sup>1</sup> There is nothing in the secular professions of medicine, law, nursing or social work which corresponds with the concept of the Church as both the focus and source of pastoral care. Most professional groups see themselves as having two [or possibly three] directions of responsibility: responsibility to clients, responsibility to colleagues [and, possibly, responsibility to an employing authority or to society which licences them]. Thus there are, for such groups, separate though overlapping areas of responsibility, and frequently the collegial responsibility is seen as the most important, since this ensures the autonomy and strength of a distinctive professional approach. The context of pastoral care, on the other hand, is much more ambiguous in character. (Campbell, 1985, p56)

evolve out of the life of the Christian community and the shared commitment of the religious practitioner to certain basic values and ideals.

Thus this type of approach resolves a number of the tensions that are seen in the elitist nature of professionalism and its basis of authority through redefining the professional in terms of the community of faith. This moves the focus of professional authority away from professional expertise and socio-political power on to specific commitments to particular disciplines and values. Secondly, in so shifting the focus, it allows Campbell to attack the basis of modern professionalism without having to advocate a de-professionalisation of Christian ministry. Campbell clearly recognises that to abandon a professional perspective with the knowledge, skill, responsibility and commitments that it brings is ill-advised. As he notes:

Certainly we must not abandon pastoral care to the chaos of undisciplined and unexamined 'common sense'. Much injury is done in the name of a common sense which is merely prejudice disguised as simplicity. The true simplicity of pastoral care does not come easily, and for most of us it is not a natural aptitude which we can apply without preparation, discipline and careful thought (Campbell, 1985, p.48).

Thus in so broadening the base and understanding of professionalism he is able to continue to advocate a process of professionalisation, while reducing the elitist and manipulative implications of such a process. Thirdly, in setting professionalism within the community of faith it also alerts us to the whole distinctive Christian understanding of professionalism that evolves out of the life of faith. Thus professionalism is moved away from its secular context, so that it becomes an expression of the community of faith. A movement away from a professionalism based on a particular expertise, to a professionalism that is truly rooted in the basic disciplines and commitments of the practitioner.

### **characteristics of clerical authority**

SK develops these ideas even further. In his thought the ordained ministry is the custodian of a specific moral and ethical code that embodies values that are fundamental to the development of social life. It is the role of the clerical profession to ensure that these basic ethical and religious values are not eroded by the self-interested and pragmatic nature of social relations.

Yet SK is not suggesting in this that the ethico-religious authority of the clerical profession should be enshrined in a series of propositional truths and norms that are then imposed on social relations. Any such code of conduct could only be an external expression of an embodied reality. That is to say, as we saw in the previous chapter, SK did not see professionalism as an external force which had to be imposed on the self-interested nature of human being. Rather it had to be the expression of a basic value orientation in the life of the individual that was expressed in a social role. Thus he assumed that the life-style and value commitments of the clerical professional is an essential element in professional authority.

SK believed, just as Campbell suggests, the professional authority of the ordained ministry must evolve out of the life of faith and not the socio-political structures of power in society. As he illustrates in his thought through contrasting two types of clerical authority:

"Authority" does not mean to be a king or to be an emperor or general, to have the power of arms, to be a bishop, or to be a policeman,\* but it means by a firm and conscious resolution to be willing to sacrifice everything, one's very life, for his cause; it means to articulate a cause in such a way that a person is at one with himself, needing nothing and fearing nothing. This infinite recklessness\*\* is authority. True authority is present when the truth is the cause. The reason the Pharisees spoke without authority, although they were indeed authorized teachers, was precisely that their talk, like their lives, was in the power of seventeen finite concerns.

\* *In margin*: This is the conception of immanent authority, not the paradoxical conception of authority.

\*\* *In margin*: Those with authority, therefore, always address themselves to the conscience, not to understanding, intelligence, profundity - to human being, not to the professor (pap.viii 1 A 416 [JP183])

However, unlike Campbell the value commitments out of which the professional identity of the ordained ministry evolves is concerned not so much with the Christian community, as with the imitation of Christ. It is in view of the distinctive responsibility that the ordained ministry has to be representative of Christ and so to act as Christian witnesses in society that the distinctive authority of the clerical profession is to be found. It is as the occupational identity and role of the clergy truly reflects and expresses the ethico-religious ideals and values that Christ represents in the life of society that a legitimate basis for clerical authority is established.

## 1] example

Yet this for SK means that the clergy must establish their authority and position in society through example. The clergy should not impose their authority on others through socio-political forces or controls, but rather through the power of specific actions and modes of behaviour. SK believes that the 'Witness to truth' finds his or her authority in actions which protect the rights of the weak and the dispossessed whether that is in religious life, education, health or law (pap.x 4 578 [JP4685]; pap.viii 1 A 254, 452, 589 [JP6045, 6085, 6120]). Thus specific actions in SK have an intrinsic quality which relates to the very nature of what it means to be human. There is something in the activities of people exhibiting solidarity with the weak and the dispossessed that makes us necessarily perceive these actions as good and morally responsible. For these actions touch upon what it means to be truly human and challenge the alienated nature of the human self (see chapter 3 and 4).

SK assumes that there is a basis of morality and moral authority found in our shared humanity. Moral traditions are an external expression of this and social structure and relations may suppress it, but nevertheless there is a shared basis of morality in our essential nature. The 'Witness to the truth' stands out from the rest of the egotistic forms of moral expression in society to point people to this fundamental underlying moral awareness through what he or she does. Thus although SK would not deny the importance of moral traditions and socio-political forces in the emergence of social values and the structures of human authority, he affirms that there exists a source of authority and morality that goes beyond the confines of the social matrix: a source that is rooted in the essential nature of humanity, written on the heart of humanity. That is to say, the authority of the 'Witness to the truth' is derived from our shared humanity.

This was the authority with which Christ came. His authority was not based in socio-political powers or structures, but in the way in which he brought our own humanity to bear upon us (pap.xi 1 A 436 [JP191]). Through what he did and his siding with the weak and oppressed he forced us to recognise our moral responsibility and obligation towards others and it was this which gave him his power and authority in relation to others. This type of authority is distinct from that which finds its source in socio-political power. As SK notes, 'Christ preached with authority - this "the clergyman" now also does, for in reverse he has the police and the house of correction' (pap.x 4 A 644 [JP190]).

Therefore, for SK the authority of the ordained ministry must not be established through socio-political power, but through example. Yet this is not to deny that socio-political power may be an important part of clerical occupational identity for as we have already seen SK was very reluctant to advocate the disestablishment of Church and State. Rather what he wanted to point to was that fact that the authority of the clergy must evolve out of the personal value commitments of the individual practitioner and that this in turn will necessitate a particular life-style and way of behaving towards others. As he stresses:

Christianity is an existence -communication [Existens-Meddelse] brought into the world by the use of authority....How, after all, can a divine teaching enter into the world? By God's empowering a few individuals and overpowering them, as it were to such a degree that at every moment throughout a long life they are willing to act, to endure, to suffer everything for this teaching. This, their unconditional obedience, is the form of their authority....He endures, then, and finally he dies. Now he is constraining. Now he constrains the race and thereby brings the divine teaching to bear upon the race (pap.x 2 A 119 [JP187]).

Thus the authority that the clergy exercise in relation to others should not be paternalistic or manipulative. The form of ministerial authority that SK envisages does not treat people 'as errant children or feckless sheep' or fail to recognise the need of personal autonomy. It does not try to impose a legalistic moral code or force others to embrace certain forms of behaviour, rather it influences others through the example that it gives. The position and power of the clergy, therefore, evolves out of what they represent to others, rather than the degree to which they are able to manipulate and control social relations.

## **2] identification**

This then leads to the second element in SK's understanding of professional authority which is identification. The professional does not stand apart from those whom he or she serves, but with them. The moral authority of which SK speaks comes out of shared experience. The professional does not stand over others and condemn their self-interests, but struggles with them in the midst of the ambiguity of human life (pap.x 4 A 274, 275, 340, 366 [JP1897, 1898, 1901, 1905]; pap.x 3 A 59 [JP3499]). Again this is very much related to SK's Christology and his understanding of the incarnation. The authority with which Christ spoke was rooted in the fact that he had entered into the experience of human life and taken upon himself the nature of fallen humanity (pap.x 3 A 187 [JP174]).

An authority, therefore, evolves when someone acts towards others who in a particular context are weaker than them, in such a way that he or she attempts to act from their point of view and identify with them. Clerical authority is not simply a question of standing over and enjoying power in relation to others lives, rather its essence is to be found in standing with others, in acting on behalf of those that one serves.

### **3] vulnerability**

Yet taking this one step further, if professional authority assumes example and identification, then it will inevitably lead to vulnerability. In the *Attack* witness and suffering are perceived to be almost synonymous. 'Witnessing to the truth' will always involve 'suffering for the truth'. This is because SK believes that it is in the face of human weakness and vulnerability that a true clerical authority is to be secured. If the nature of Christianity demands of its representative a form of moral example and identification then this for SK leads to a conflict of interests. For although an authority which seeks to establish itself in terms of example and identification would resist the occupational structures that foster powerful elites and negative and manipulative forms of social control, it would not resolve the dilemma for the practitioner. He or she would continue to struggle with the social and professional structures within which his or her work is conducted which at times work against the basic ethico-religious values and ideals to which he or she subscribes.

Moreover, a conflict results in the practitioner himself or herself, for although the authority of the clerical profession is derived from the basic value commitments of the practitioner these are held in tension with the forces of human egotism and self-interest. As Campbell argues:

The so-called caring of the caring professions is at its most suspect when it claims to be pure and incorruptible altruism. One can be sure that the doctor, nurse or social worker who does it all for love, never for money or career success, has a secret reward much more dangerous to the helped person than anything the most money-grabbing practitioner might do. The person in it for money will watch out for the survival and satisfaction of his or her source of income: but there is no such escape for the unfortunate victim of what Charles Causeley calls the 'ferocious goodwill' of those who wear 'the neon armour of virtue' (Campbell, 1985).

As I have already noted, SK was acutely aware of the struggle in the life of the Christian between the ethico-religious ideals embodied in Christ and the outworking of these in the egotistic nature of humanity. To enter the clerical profession is never



simply 'to have one's moral conflicts about one's duties and ambitions eased, and even solved, by a code of conduct which clothes the all-too-human self-seeking in the robes of self-denying dignity and nobility' (Halmos 1970, p.27). On the contrary, the life of the professional is marked by a definitive form of suffering. It is a suffering which comes out of the struggle to reconcile the role and structures in which one is engaged with the fundamental ethico-religious requirements of professional authority. Yet this suffering also comes as one struggles and stands against those structures which impose socio-political values that cannot be reconciled with the ideals for which one stands.

An inner struggle, therefore, is seen in the life of the religious professional. This struggle is concerned with valuing others in their own right, seeing them as separate beings of value independent of one's self-interest. It is in struggling to represent this ideal and to stand for this type of ethico-religious value in a world where nothing other than pragmatic and utilitarian values would seem to have a place that the significance of the clerical profession is to be found. Yet this also requires a vulnerability in terms of a basic human honesty and integrity that is willing to admit the struggle and failings of the clerical professional in reflecting this ideal. For in acknowledging one's own failure and weakness one affirms the significance and importance of the ideal.

However, SK also sees a further struggle as one stands against those structures which impose socio-political values that cannot be reconciled with the ideals for which one stands. Thus the clerical professional is seen to embody a distinctive type of authority as he or she makes himself or herself vulnerable in regard to the socio-political powers at work in society as he or she challenges the oppressive and inequitable nature of social structures and relations. It is this struggle which in turn provides the basis for the transformation and moral renewal of social life. Thus in the vulnerability of the clerical professional, who acknowledges his and her own moral ambiguity and self-interests and stands in opposition to the oppressive and negative forces in the socio-political order in such a way that threatens his or her own position is a distinctive and potent authority to be found.

SK's understanding of clerical professional authority, therefore, can be seen to be very much influenced by his Christology and the assumption that Christ should provide the pattern for Christian ministry. For only a form of authority that does not impose or manipulate others, but rather acts as a catalyst by which the individual is forced to come to terms with ethical realities and challenges is social and moral renewal possible.

Thus for SK professional authority must be rooted in an ethico-religious commitment that requires of the practitioner moral example, identification and vulnerability. Only through this form and expression of authority in the life and work of the clergy is the transformation of society possible. For this form of authority gives a paradigm in the life of society, that provides a distinctive movement away from the self towards the other. It defines people as significant in their own right apart from one's own self-interest and their social utility. It provides through its example and pattern an opportunity for the discovery and recovery of human worth and a true humanity in social relations and structures.

### **8.3 directions in clerical professionalism**

Thus the thrust of SK's later thought would appear to suggest there is an unacceptable understanding and legitimisation of the authority of the clerical profession that is oppressive and 'demoralising'. For SK, as the professional authority and identity of the Danish clergy is rooted in the dominant values of the existing socio-political order and sustained by government sanction it embodies a form of authorisation that is irreconcilable with the nature of Christianity. On the other hand, a potential source of authority may be seen in the occupational identity of the clergy that 'Witnesses to the truth'. This portrays a professional authority that is demonstrated in example, identification and vulnerability and which is grounded in the intrinsic nature of what it is to be human. That is to say, the only acceptable and appropriate basis for the professional identity and authority of the ordained ministry is a distinctive life-style that reflects the embodiment of ethico-religious ideals and values which affirm human worth.

The conclusion SK reaches stresses that the moral component and function of professional identity must be the fundamental characteristic of all clerical professionalism. This returns us again to the altruistic definition and function of professionalism that we saw forwarded by Durkheim. Yet unlike Durkheim, SK sees the moral dimension of clerical professionalism functioning in a very different way. Rather than providing the basis for the continued existence of a particular socio-political order, it challenges the accepted values and egotism of society. In the acting out a particular set of values that are seen to embody a self-transcendence, the clergy provide a mirror in which the self-interest of society is revealed and gives a pattern for the moral development of social structures and existence. They act as the custodians of a specific ethico-religious tradition which holds out the potential of social renewal.

Thus, in view of this, it is possible to suggest at least four potential directions in SK's thought for the professional identity of the clergy and the conflicts this poses.

### **1] centrality of Christology.**

The first implication is that Christology needs to be seen as the focal point of clerical professional identity. As was noted, the way in which SK defined his understanding of professional authority reflected the pattern of authority that was seen in the person and work of Christ. With the recent shifts in the way that professional practice is seen and defined, there has been a movement away from the traditional service ideology. The altruistic structure and framework which once was a fundamental part of professional service and identity, has been replaced by the notion of a social contract that is governed by a set of conditions and rules that are limited purely to the social transaction of practitioner and client. And so, the professions have increasingly been defined in terms of 'highly trained technocrats waiting for their consumers to determine what service they wish to have performed' [Hauerwas, 1986, p.9]. Thus the ethico-religious context of professionalism has slowly been eroded and the clerical profession has not been entirely isolated from this process.

However, this has consequences for the values that are expressed in professional practice. The paradigm or pattern which influenced professional behaviour has changed, and as Durkheim and Parsons would suggest this has serious implications for self-interest in the life of society. For if the altruistic ideals, even if they were not embodied, did provide a form of social constraint, to weaken the traditional professional altruistic persona negates an important ethical ideal and its regulating influence.

In a similar way, SK believes that it is ethico-religious ideals that call forth social action and change. Yet unlike Parsons and Durkheim this ideal must always be embodied. The embodiment of the ultimate altruistic ideal is seen in the person and work of Christ. It is the pattern that he establishes in the life of society that must call forth change and define the nature of the religious professional. It is in the imitation of Christ that clerical professionalism finds its power to transform.

Thus Christology and the pattern that it provides is fundamental to professional identity. It shapes the professional practice of the ordained ministry and in turn influences the life of society. If Christology's role in defining occupational identity is undermined and a

new pattern established in its place, then it is that which provides the blue-print for clerical social influence. If such a pattern is the result of existing socio-political values and ideals, then the profession simply becomes implicated in ensuring the alienating and iniquitous nature of social structures and relations. SK's approach to professionalism, therefore, would maintain that a basic Christology must be emphasised and held as fundamental in the training and occupational identity for ordained ministry.

## **2] personal value commitments**

This leads to a second important consideration which is that the nature of clerical professionalism must evolve out of the personal value commitments of the individual practitioner and not only express socio-political structures. The authority of the clerical professional must be rooted in his or her imitation of Christ which demonstrates the embracing and outworking of certain ethico-religious values and ideals in the life of the individual.

Yet as we saw in chapter six, in recent years there has been a progressive movement away from the traditional conception of professionalism that emphasised the integral nature of life and work towards a far greater emphasis on technical expertise and proficiency. The professional is one who delivers a high standard of skilled service to others in the context of a social contract. Outside that contract and the realm of work, the individual's private life is their own as long as it does not impinge on their occupational ability. A subtle separation of life and work, therefore, has become far more acceptable within the professions with professional identity and authority resting much more on the technical proficiency of the practitioner delivered within a specific social contract that supposedly ensures the equity and neutrality of the service given.

However, traditional understandings of ordained ministry and lack of a clearly defined body of expertise has made it more difficult for the clergy to adopt this model. Nevertheless, there has been significant indications of a tendency towards such a separation of life and work as the occupational identity of the ordained ministry continues to change. Campbell points to a number of such indicators in American studies and in a British context as professional identity progresses in this direction its influence will become more apparent (see chapter 6).

Yet SK's understanding of clerical professionalism would not allow for such a separation of life and work. It rejects a definition of professionalism that sees it purely in terms of expertise and proficiency. Returning to a much more traditional perception of professionalism, SK insists that the embodiment of moral ideals must be the principal characteristic of the professions. Professional expertise in the ordained ministry always should be a secondary consideration, after the life-style and moral orientation of the practitioner.

SK rejects the modern assumption that one's private life does not have any necessary relationship to one's occupational ability and proficiency. Such an assumption fails to appreciate the value statements that are involved in particular occupational roles. As we saw in the previous chapter, MacIntyre illustrates the way in which value structures are embodied in social roles and behaviour. For SK the way in which one lives and the interpretations one chooses to place on this communicates to others. To formulate professional encounters that purely relate in terms of a social contract that defines and limits the relationship to this and has no bearing on the practitioner's life outside of it, communicates certain values and ideals. The implication of this is that it negates any sense of self-transcendence. It is impossible for the clergy to function as witness to truth and adopt this type of compartmentalised and isolated life style. The inherent nature of the 'Witness to the truth' demands the centrality of a moral vision in professional definition.

Thus the professional nature of the ordained ministry is not primarily conditioned by the proficiency of the clergy in terms of preaching, pastoral care and the leading and administration of a Christian community, rather it is dependent on the values that are seen to be embodied by them. As SK writes, 'it has now become clear to me that in one sense the priest does in fact produce a prodigious effect, that his *existence* transforms society as a whole' [1968, p230 italics mine]. It is the ethico-religious values and ideals in the life of society that the ordained ministry represent which is critical. The expertise and ability of the religious practitioner is a subordinate consideration to the values that are seen to be embodied in his or her life-style and this implies that personal value commitments must be at the centre of any form of clerical professionalism.

### **3] political involvement**

The implication in SK's thought that clerical professional identity must involve the imitation of Christ and personal commitment to the ethico-religious that are seen to be implicit within the Christian faith leads us to a third aspect. SK's approach would resist the notion of professional political neutrality (see 4.2). Christ and Christianity represents that which challenges the existing socio-political order and its structures. Thus unlike the supposedly 'apolitical' position of the modern professions that provide a means by which to sustain and ensure existing social structures and values, SK holds to a radical view of professional activity as that which challenges and confronts the existing order. In setting professional activity and values in a wider moral and Christian context, SK resists the notion that professional commitment can be limited to a social contract existing between practitioner and client. There is a transcending of the relationships between professional and non-professional, for professional authority is seen to be rooted in social relationships outside such an encounter. Yet this moral dimension necessitates that the professions cannot function merely as extensions of the dominant institutions of political and economic powers, for the nature of Christianity is such that it stands over and against the socio-political order.

SK's vision of clerical professionalism does not identify itself with any political programme or agenda. Yet it maintains that professionalism is inherently political. The clergy as an occupational body must influence social policy and those who formulate it through the moral ideals that they defend and perpetrate in the life of society. Thus the clergy reveal the self-interested nature of social relations and political power through a moral pattern, so calling forth a change in social structures and relations.

### **4] Integrity**

This then leads to the fourth characteristic suggested by SK's work -professional integrity. With SK's assumption that professional authority should be rooted in moral categories and his conviction that professionalism will always entail an element that expresses the egotistic and self-serving structures of society, integrity was a key concept in his thought. The only way in which SK was able to reconcile the demand for moral ideals and the fallen nature of human institutions was through such a concept. Integrity allowed the professional practitioner to act as a 'Witness to the truth', while at the same time reflecting many of the secularised values of his socio-political context.



This is possible because through a professional integrity that acknowledge the practitioner's self-interests an indirect relationship to ethico-religious ideals is expressed. In admitting what one is not, one is in effect pointing to what one should be. Integrity acknowledges the moral obligation under which one lives and so recognises that professional authority is rooted in an ethico-religious frame of reference. It is a refusal to deny, despite external pressures or one's own self-interests, the moral obligation and responsibility in relation to which one lives. Alastair Campbell's again brings considerable insight to SK when he writes:

To possess integrity is to be incapable of compromising that which we believe to be true. Perhaps then the word with a more old-fashioned ring - 'steadfastness' - may convey the richness of meaning better. To possess integrity is to have a kind of inner strength which prevents us from bending to the influence of what is thought expedient, or fashionable or calculated to win praise; it is to be consistent and utterly trustworthy because of a consistency of purpose....The person of integrity is first and foremost a critic of self, of tendencies to self-deception and escape from reality, of desire for a false inner security in place of the confrontation with truth which integrity demands (Campbell, 1981, p.12).

It is this confrontation with the truth, with the meaning and demands of Christ for the self and society, that drives the religious professional, embodied in concrete actions. Integrity is a determination to become that which I am not yet, but aspire to be. It expresses an unwillingness to let go of the ethical ideals which Christianity sustains and the implicit patterns it calls for in social structures and relations. As SK writes of his age:

Instead of proclaiming the ideals, they educe what experiences teaches, what the experience of all the centuries has taught, that the millions get no further than mediocrity.

Thus they apply Christianity tranquillizingly, whereas instead it is in the deepest sense arousing, disquieting! They apply it tranquillizingly: "To strive after the ideals is folly, stupidity, madness, it is pride, conceit (things which are offensive to God); the via media is true wisdom; be tranquil, you are completely like the millions; and the experience of all the centuries teaches that one gets no further!...In this way they have demoralized Christendom by doing exactly the opposite of proclaiming the ideals [AUC, 1968, pp.262-263]

Integrity never claims to have realised the ideal, but in the same way it will not let it go, for to acknowledge one's relationship to the ideal is the essence of integrity. Thus clerical professional integrity becomes a force within society that calls for change and will not accept the pragmatic and utilitarian answers of a secular age.

This then leads us to what Plekon calls the 'incarnational optimism' of SK's later thought and the *Attack* itself. This optimism that is seen to lie behind the cynical polemic of the *Attack*, holds out that change is possible. That Christianity can influence, through those who embody its ideals with an integrity of purpose and life, the alienated structures of society.

Therefore, SK challenges us to look at the nature of clerical professionalism and evaluate what messages and what values it is perpetrating in the life of the church and the wider society; to look at what is done and ask whether it is compatible with the basic values of Christianity reflected in Christ. He challenges us to face up to the moral responsibilities of the ordained ministry in life and work and in shaping the life of society. Thus the fundamental value of his thought is that it alerts us to the possibilities that the occupational identity of the clergy has in shaping social values and ideals. He presents the potential that clerical practice has to act as a powerful force for social change, highlighting the potential that exists in professional practice marked by moral example, identification and vulnerability to regulate the self-interested nature of social relations and structure.

## Conclusion - the 'Attack' and its relevance

Obviously SK's attack on the Christianity of nineteenth century Denmark and the professional identity of the clergy addresses issues that are very much related to the context in which he was writing. The rise of the new liberal and secular order presented him with a number of questions as to the effectiveness and future of a clerical witness in the rapidly changing socio-political and socio-cultural landscape of Western Europe, and it was out of this social and ecclesiastical ferment that he wrote.

The issues that he confronted were related to an age in which the traditional role of the clergy was still that of a royal functionary and representative of the state (see chapter 1). The clergy had not been marginalised in the wake of modernity and they were still viewed as an essential and prestigious body in the life of society. However, urbanisation had brought about a significant decline in church attendance and the decline of the Church as an institution had already begun. Yet SK wrote at the beginning of the modern liberal and secular age before many of the problems that confront the church and its ordained ministry today had even been intimated. Even though it is possible to claim that SK perceived with amazing insight many of the consequences of the changing socio-political order throughout Europe, it does not change the fact that he spoke into a situation very different from the one that we have today.

However, despite this SK's work is still very relevant to a number of contemporary issues. His Christology provides an important challenge to the way that we apply the person and work of Christ to the life of society, as well as to our concepts of ordained ministry. The problems of struggling with 'being in the world, but not of it' also continue to be relevant, as does the whole question of what it means to live in a fallen and alienated society for the church's relationship to the socio-political structures that envelop it. Yet most importantly of all SK's work provides us with a number of insights on the nature of Christian witness and the way in which the occupational identity and values of the ordained ministry can shape social relations and structures.

SK's thought provides us with a basic theological framework in which issues relating to the professional identity of the clergy may be discussed and examined in relation to the life of society. Clearly, though his work does have a number of limitations. His understanding of the occupational identity of the clergy, for instance, is obviously very limited. He writes not as a sociologist, but as an acute observer of human behaviour and its consequences.

Yet even in saying this it must be recognised that many of the conclusions that he reaches do have similarities with contemporary discussions on the nature and role of the professions. For instance, his analysis of social structures and their relationship to the vested-interests of particular groups within society does have considerable affinity with the advocates of 'historical and dynamic structuralism', as does his understanding of the clergy as a self-interested occupational body that manipulates public perceptions in order to sustain its social position and power. Thus, although SK does derive his understanding of society from a philosophical and theological framework - alienated humanity turning towards finite and temporal concerns - his conclusions nevertheless may be seen to have an affinity with and relationship to certain types of contemporary sociological theory.

Yet SK's Christology may be criticised as rather narrow and imbalanced. The portrayal of Christ as an offence to reason and the socio-political order, certainly neglects a number of other aspects of New Testament Christology. [Christ as Messiah, teacher, healer, and apocalyptic prophet, for instance]. There is certainly more evidence in the New Testament for other views of Christ than for the view of him as the 'absurd' and 'the offence' to all human reason and accomplishment. Yet as Elrod stresses, 'this objection rests on the failure to recognise SK's historical situation, which both motivated and justifies his emphasis' (Elrod, 1981, p.213).

When SK represents Christ as essentially an offence to reason, he does not conceive of the conflict in abstract terms, as have most of the scholars who attempt to interpret SK's thought. SK was not conducting a philosophical debate *in vacuo* about the nature of Christ and the relation of reason to faith. On the contrary, he was struggling to prevent the ideological use of the name of Christ in the name of specific modes of reasoning by speculative theologians and social innovators in nineteenth-century Denmark. It is mistaken to assume that SK was as politically disinterested as most theologians and philosophers have thought themselves to be. His purpose was to place the actions and words of Christ on such a paradoxical footing that all attempts rationally to comprehend and justify them for speculative and practical purposes would be rendered impossible. His radical emphasis on the self-exaltation of the man Jesus rendered the Christian religion useless to those committed to the modernisation of Denmark (Elrod, 1981, p.215).

Moreover, SK's Christology represent an important historical school of thought. It is an outworking of the suffering servant Christology of the Bible itself, together with the Lutheran and pietistic notion of Christ as the embodiment of both law and grace. And although, it may be described as a rather reactionary approach, it nevertheless is an important perspective that deserves consideration. The radical nature of the Christology, not only in relation to human reason and the incarnation, but also as regards Christ's relationship to the socio-political structures and values of society means that it has a very important contribution to make to contemporary debate.

Yet what is of great significance in SK is the way in which he relates this basic Christology to the work and identity of the ordained ministry. This gives rise to the notion of the Church and its ordained ministry as a witnessing community in the face of social oppression and injustice. For certainly SK's later writings may be read and understood as an important study in the role of the clergy and Christianity in social change. For, although, one would not want to confine the notion of Christian witness to the ordained ministry, nevertheless it does raise important issues as to what is the responsibility of the clergy in this area. Moreover, it gives serious consideration to the way in which clerical expression can compromise and hinder the gospel of Christ in its challenge to the dominant socio-political and socio-cultural values found in a society.

Therefore, the value of SK's work is that in considering these issues he examines a number of theological and practical concerns in a single conceptual framework. He brings to the modern debate on clerical occupational identity at least three fundamental considerations.

The first, is the relationship of Christ to society and the ethical prerogative of the gospel. SK raises the question as to what should be the relationship between the self-revelation of God in Christ and the dominant socio-political order. Is the church to provide a legitimisation of, or a challenge to, the values that are enshrined in the social structures and behaviour of society ? What is distinctive in SK is that it is into this context that he sets the question of clerical identity and practice. Unlike other contemporary studies of the nature of ordained ministry, SK does not begin with his understanding of the church. Rather he examines the clergy in terms of their relationship to the self-revelation of God in Christ and the ethical imperative that this brings to the life of the individual and society.

SK, therefore, sets the discussion about the professional identity of the ordained ministry in a context that is Christological in nature. He provides a perspective for contemporary thinking that relates the nature of the gospel, society and clerical identity in a very distinctive and unique way.

The second, is that SK highlights the extent to which secular values shape clerical identity. He raises the question as to the relationship between the socio-cultural and socio-political values of specific societies and the role of the clergy. What is particularly significant in this is that he explores this question in relation to the ability of the clergy to effect social change. He causes us to examine how professional self-interests and the embracing of secular values may hinder the effectiveness of Christianity.

The third, is that SK forces us to examine how we may find more effective ways 'to Witness to the truth' while recognising the ambiguity in the social and occupational identity of the clergy. One of the greatest strengths of SK's work is that it does not assume a naive and idealistic approach to the values embraced in the occupational identity of the clergy. On the contrary, it begins by accepting and even insisting on the fact that the Church and its clergy will always be implicated to a greater or lesser extent in the alienated nature of social relations and structures. However, despite this it challenges our contemporary practice and understanding of ordained ministry to find creative solutions to such limitations in order that the gospel will be communicated in a way that truly reflects the transforming power of Christ in society.

We could also add to this that SK's work provides us with two possible patterns through which this could be accomplished. One that proposes an accommodation of professional and secular values, while maintaining that the ambivalence and tension in clerical identity must be recognised. The other that suggests professionalisation and the adoption of secular occupational values is completely incompatible with communicating the Christian message. Every effort, therefore, needs to be made in finding a model of ministry that ensures that the values embraced in the occupational identity of the clergy do not compromise the nature of the gospel, while recognising that one is always conditioned by the socio-political and socio-cultural situation in which one lives. Thus these two patterns provide us with some possible perspectives that may be explored in relation to the ambivalence of clerical professionalisation in a contemporary setting.



Therefore, this thesis has attempted to set SK's *Attack* in its social and political context and show that in view of this one of its principal concerns was the nature of Christian witness. It has attempted to show the relationship between SK's understanding of a secular age, his Christology and the role and significance of the ordained ministry in the life of society. In so doing, it has attempted to break with popular caricatures of SK's work which view it as purely concerned with the single individual and human subjectivity, and completely apolitical in nature. It has attempted to show that the *Attack* remains 'the incommensurable element' for those who insist SK's religion was completely irrelevant to the emerging social and economic realities of his time. Thus the thesis suggests a reading of SK which stresses that his work, and especially his later writings, cannot be understood in isolation from his social and political context.

In view of this, the thesis has provided an interpretation of SK and his *Attack* which argues that his principal concern at the end of his life was not the disestablishment of the Church, but the nature of Christian witness. It has endeavoured to show how concerned SK was with the relationship of Christianity to its socio-political context and how this was the logical outworking of his Christology and understanding of ordained ministry, as representative individuals called to the imitation of Christ. Thus the thesis not only suggests a new interpretation of SK's later thought, but develops further SK's Christology and understanding of ordained ministry within the context of Christian witness, showing how SK's Christology led him to a radical and 'militant' interpretation of the gospel and the role of clergy.

However, the significance of the thesis is not only found in its reading of SK, but also in its attempt to apply SK's thought to some of the contemporary issues surrounding clerical occupational identity. Acknowledging the distinction between the context in which SK wrote and the contemporary context in which the ordained ministry work, the thesis suggests that it is nevertheless possible to see SK's thought making a valuable and important contribution to the modern debate surrounding clerical professionalisation. As we have already noted, SK can be seen to provide a theological framework to the nature of the relationship of the socio-political order to clerical identity and role, he alerts us to the question of the relationship of secular values to occupational identity of the clergy, and most significantly of all he sets the issue of clerical occupational identity in the context of Christian witness.

The thesis, therefore, illustrates the potential application of SK's thought in relation to contemporary issues facing the modern Church. It attempts to explore and develop SK's work in a very different direction from the traditional philosophical, theological, and historical analysis that it has been subject to, by looking at what practical applications are to be found within it and how these relate to questions of practical theology. This can then be seen to create a reciprocal relationship, for as the thesis shows, SK's work not only brings insights to contemporary ecclesiastical issues, but contemporary forms of social analysis provide a means by which to further interpret SK.

Thus the thesis provides a distinctive approach to the application and outworking of SK's thought. It suggests a number of new directions in the interpretation and application of SK. Yet it also highlights the ambiguity in SK as he struggled with the tension in his own life and understanding of Christianity, as he called for an integrity of purpose and life that challenges the world around it in what he called 'Witnesses to the truth'.

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# Appendixes

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## Appendix A

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# Chronology

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### 1813

- May 5            Soren Aabye Kierkegaard born at Nytrov 2, Copenhagen, son of Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard and Anne Sorensdatter Lund Kierkegaard.
- June 3            Baptisted in Vor Frue Kirke congregation (meeting in Heliggeist Kirke) in Copenhagen.

### 1828

- April 20            Confirmed in Vor Frue Kirke congregation (meeting in Trinitatis Kirke) by Pastor J.P. Mynster (later Bishop of Sjaelland).

### 1830

- October 30        Registered as student at University of Copenhagen
- November 1        Drafted into Royal Guard, Company 7
- November 7        Medical discharge as unfit for service

### 1834

- April 15            Entry pap.i A 1 of journals and papers.
- July 15            Mother dies.

### 1838

“The Battle between the Old and New Soap Cellars” (a philosophical comedy drafted but not completed or published; see pap.ii B 1-21).

- May 19 SK describes the first of several religious experiences in his journals, speaking of 'an indescribable joy' (see pap.ii A 228).
- August 9 Father dies, 2:00 A.M.
- September 7 Publication of *From the Papers of One Still Living, published against his will by S. Kierkegaard*. (About H.C. Andersen as a novelist, with special reference to his latest work, *Only a Fiddler*.)

#### 1840

- July 3 Completes examination for degree (*magna cum laude*).
- September 8 Proposes to Regine Olsen

#### 1841

- July 16 Dissertation for the *magister* degree (doctorate), *The Concept of Irony, with Constant Reference to Socrates*, accepted.
- August 11 Returns Regine Olsen's engagement ring.
- September 16 Dissertation printed.
- October 25 Leaves Copenhagen for Berlin, where he attends Schelling's lectures.

#### 1842

- March 6 Returns to Copenhagen
- November 11 SK's brother Peter Christian Kierkegaard ordained.  
*Johannes Climacus, or De omnibus dubitandum est* begun but not completed or published.

#### 1843

- February 20 *Either/Or*, edited by Victor Eremita, published.
- May 16 *Two Upbuilding [Edifying] Discourses*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.
- October 16 *Repetition*, by Constantin Constantius; *Fear and Trembling*, by Johannes de Silentio; and *Three Upbuilding [Edifying] Discourses*, by S.Kierkegaard, published.
- December 6 *Four Upbuilding [Edifying] discourses*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.

## 1844

- March 5      *Two Upbuilding [Edifying] discourses*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.
- June 8      *Three Upbuilding [Edifying] discourses*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.
- June 13     *Philosophical Fragments*, by Johannes Climacus, published.
- June 17     *The Concept of Anxiety [Dread]*, by Vigilius Haufniensis; and *Prefaces* by Nicholaus Notabene, published.
- August 31   *Four Upbuilding [Edifying] Discourses*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.

## 1845

- April 29     *Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.
- April 30     *Stages on Life's Way*, edited by Hilarius Bogbinder, published.
- May 29      *Eighteen Upbuilding [Edifying] Discourses* (from 1842-43), by S. Kierkegaard, published.
- December 27 The start of the Corsair Affair with the publication of SK's article 'The Activity of a Travelling Esthetician...', in *The Fatherland*.

## 1846

- January 2    The first of a series of satirical attacks on SK in *The Corsair*
- February 7   Considers qualifying himself for ordination (pap.viii 1 A 4).
- February 27   *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, by Johannes Climacus, published.
- March 30     *Two Ages: the Age of Revolution and the Present Age. A Literary Review*, by S. Kierkegaard, published as a conclusion to his authorship.

## 1847

- September 29 *Works of Love*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.

## 1848

- April 26      *Christian Discourses*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.
- July 24       *The Crisis in the life of an Actress*, by Inter et Inter, published.



November      *The point of View for My Work as an Author* 'as good as finished' (pap.ix A 293); published posthumously in 1859 by SK's brother Peter Christian Kierkegaard.  
                     'Armed Neutrality,' by S. Kierkegaard, 'written toward the end of 1848 and the beginning of 1849' (pap.x 5 B 105-10) but not published.

#### 1849

May 14          Second edition of *Either/Or*; and *The Lily of the Field and the Bird of the Air*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.  
 May 19          *Two Minor Ethical-Religious Essays*, by H.H., published.  
 July 30          *The Sickness Unto Death*, by Anti-Climacus, published.  
 November 13   *Three Discourses at the Communion on Fridays*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.

#### 1850

September 27   *Practice [Training] in Christianity*, by Anti-Climacus, published.  
 December 20   *An Upbuilding [Edifying] Discourse*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.

#### 1851

January 31      'An open letter...Dr Rudelbach,' by S. Kierkegaard, published.  
 August 7        *On My Work as an Author*; and *Two Discourses at the Communion on Fridays*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.  
 September 10   *For Self-Examination*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.  
                     *Judge for Yourselves!*, by S. Kierkegaard, written. Published posthumously, 1876.

#### 1854

January 30      Bishop Mynster dies.  
 April 15        H. Martensen appointed as his successor.  
 December 18   SK publishes the first of twenty one articles in *Fatherland* attacking Bishop Mynster and Martensen's eulogy of him as a 'Witness to the Truth'.

## 1855

- May 16 Second edition of *Practice [Training] in Christianity*, by Anti-Climacus, published.  
Tract, *This Has To Be Said; So Be It Now Said*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.
- May 24 The first edition of the pamphlet, *The Instant*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.
- May 26 The last of the twenty one articles in *Fatherland* published.
- June 16 Tract, *Christ's Judgement on Official Christianity*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.
- September 3 *The Unchangeableness of God. A Discourse*, by S. Kierkegaard, published.
- September 25 Ninth and last edition of *The Instant* published; number 10 published posthumously.  
SK writes his last journal entry (pap.xi 2 A 439).
- October 2 Enters Frederiks Hospital, after collapsing in the street.
- November 11 Dies.
- November 18 Buried in Assistents Cemetery, Copenhagen.

## Appendix B

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# The pathological reading of Kierkegaard's 'Attack'

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The suggestion that SK's psychological state was far from balanced when he embarked on his critique of the church merits serious consideration. Apart from the irregularities of his writings, there is considerable evidence to suggest that SK's behaviour was increasingly obsessive and uncharacteristic towards the end of his life. Louis Dupre records that in his final weeks, SK actually stopped churchgoers in the street in an attempt to dissuade them from the sin of worshipping in the State Church, while another Danish biographer 'gives us the picture of SK on a Sunday morning, at the hour of High Mass, deliberately taking up a position at a sidewalk cafe opposite a church, and there conspicuously reading a newspaper [and laughing] so that all the pious en route to the service might see' (AUC, 1968, p.xx). SK completely ostracised his elder brother because he was part of the establishment, refusing to see him even while dying in hospital, and he even refused the last rites from his close friend Emil Boesen because he was a priest (Eller, 1968, p.19). It would also appear that when he collapsed in the street from what he knew to be a very serious illness on the 28th September 1855, he would not go to hospital because he was determined to finish the last edition of the *Instant* (Holder, 1977, p.509).

Such intensity clearly suggests that SK's work was becoming alarmingly obsessive, affecting his own health and his relationship to others. He himself believed that the reason for his illness was the mental and physical exhaustion that he was experiencing because of the intensity with which he was working (pap.x 3 A 353 [JP1653]). Yet this obsessive behaviour takes on even greater significance when one notes that it took place in view of a family history of mental illness, which 'partly accounts for the father's melancholy and wholly for the melancholy of his elder brother Peter Christian, which was so close to insanity that it compelled him to resign his office as bishop' (Lowrie, 1944, p.27).

In fact, Peter's own son was later confined to an insane asylum, while another of SK's nephews committed suicide after several breakdowns. SK himself recognised this family 'trait of psychic instability' in his own life and records in his Journals the way in which as a young man he often felt close to the 'verge of insanity' and how he escaped his sense of despair through his writing (pap.vii 1 A 126 [JP5913]).

Symptomatic of this family history of mental illness was a guilt complex. The mental break down of SK's brother was, as Lowrie explains, because, 'He who had sought with all his learning to combat his father's illusion that he had committed the unforgivable sin, himself fell victim to the same delusion' (Lowrie, 1944, p.27). It is, therefore, very significant that we should read in the last entry of SK's Journals a statement which reads, 'The destiny of this life is that it be brought to the extremity of life-weariness....I came into existence through a crime, I came into existence against God's will. The guilt, which in one sense is not mine even though it makes me an offender in God's eyes, is to give life. The punishment corresponds to the guilt: to be deprived of all zest for life, to be led into the most extreme life weariness' (pap.xi 2 A 439 [JP6969]).

The Danish psychiatrist, Hjalmar Helweg, argues that such a negative view of life and oneself, together with the obsessional nature of SK's thought which seems to have lead him to the conclusion that he was to be a martyr, are not uncharacteristic of forms of psychosis (Holder, 1977, p.510). Moreover, the bitterness and vindictiveness of the *Attack* would also suggest some one who had lost control of their sense of perspective and reason. One could even go so far as to suggest that SK's whole notion of the individual standing against the deceived masses, which came to be a constant theme in his later writings, is a type of paranoid delusion.

Even greater weight is added to the suggestion that the *Attack* is rooted in a pathological condition, when one considers the rapidly deteriorating nature of SK's health. It is reported by Fru Andrae that the condition from which SK was suffering was 'tuberculosis of the spine marrow' (Holder, 1977, p.510). A condition which could affect his emotional and mental stability. By the end of the *Attack*, SK was almost too weak to walk and collapsed several times in the street and at friend's houses. Throughout it, he had been 'consumed with coughing', which caused the 'front of his chest to ache' and left him 'exhausted', together with excruciating pain in his legs and hips, and he eventually came to suffer from incontinence.

In the midst of this SK wrote his critique of the Danish Church and although it is difficult to assert to what extent his illness affected his work, there can be little doubt that it did have some bearing upon it. Many of the passages which speak of the suffering and pain of Christ in a number of ways reflect SK's own suffering. The *Attack*, in this regard, is no different from his other works in that his thought was always consciously shaped by, and intentionally expressed, his own life experience.

Yet despite the very real possibility that the *Attack* was in some sense pathological in nature, it cannot be completely accounted for in these terms and there are considerable difficulties in sustaining the suggestion that SK was suffering from a mental breakdown without a very selective reading and understanding of the sources available.

I would suggest that there are at least three principal objections which have to be accounted for if such a position is to be maintained. The first, is that those closest to SK did not consider him to be acting from an irrational basis. The editorial team of the *Fatherland*, which was the most respectable liberal paper of the day, saw in SK's critique a rationale and a legitimate *Attack* on the establishment. SK was a very close friend of the assistant editor of the paper, Godward, who notes that he was in a sound and resilient state of mind right up until his death. On one specific instant, he records that at a party, just two weeks before SK was admitted to hospital, he was being his usual 'amusing' and 'charming' self, providing the life and soul of the party. So that even when he collapsed on the floor, he was able to quip as others helped him, 'Oh, leave-it 'til the maid cleans it away in the morning' (Holder, 1977, p.509).

Another close friend and leading churchman of the time, Prof. Rasmus Nielsen, also confirms that SK was of sound mind and argues that the *Attack* was 'a good deed' with a very distinctive purpose and reasoning behind it (Holder, 1977, p.508). This sense of purpose is also witnessed to by SK's niece, Henrietta Lund. In a rather romanticised entry in her memoirs she writes, concerning a visit to SK in hospital, 'I received an impression that with the suffering and sadness there was mixed a sense of victory as I went into the little room, where I was met by the light which seemed to radiate from his countenance. I have never seen the spirit break through its earthly frame in that way, and lend it such brilliance, as though it were the glorified body at the dawn of the resurrection' (quoted by Holder, 1977, p.510).

What becomes apparent is that those closet to SK did not see in the *Attack* the pathological ravings of a man close to insanity, but a reasoned position born out of a desire to effect change in the nature of the Danish Church. To the student fraternity of Copenhagen the Church's attempt to dismiss the *Attack* as an aberration of a sick man and so bury SK with full ecclesiastical honours, was an insult to his position and almost resulted in a riot at his funeral.

The second problem concerns the witness of SK's own writings. David Swenson insists that 'to anyone who has read SK's journals' the suggestion that 'this *Attack* was the expression of something pathological in his nature...must seem fantastic' (Swenson, 1963, p.xlii). There is, he suggests, a fundamental logic to SK's position and the insights of the journals of this period are as profound as any that he wrote. SK's writing throughout this period does not read as the ravings of a disturbed mind, but the powerful and perceptive comments of a brilliant man as he responded to the historical and social context in which he lived. Even Helweg, who suggested SK was suffering some type of psychosis, notes 'However well one may think one has managed to say a thing, he will always discover that SK has said it better' (Lowrie, 1944, p.25). There is a characteristic rationality to all his writing, which although at points may be described as rather excessive or contrived, cannot be dismissed as completely irrational or without substance.

Moreover, this characteristic rationality is found in SK's journal entries in which he answers the accusation concerning his own mental stability. In one entry towards the end of his polemic, he writes:

When a newspaper, in both prose and poetry, has pronounced a man insane, then this man might venture to expect that, in all fairness, the paper will quit talking about him; and it betrays contempt for its readers when, after declaring a man insane, it goes on chatting with them about him as if he were not insane. This kind of conduct is talking on and on, babbling. This is the relation of Kjobenhavnsporten to me. On the occasion of my first article against Martensen the paper pronounced me - in both prose and poetry - insane. "Fine," thought I, "so I am free from Kjobenhavnsporten one less pestering triviality". But later Kjobenhavnsporten got other ideas. Without retracting that statement, it now wants to talk about me as if I were not insane. Perhaps that first pronouncement was a test to see if it could be done, something like a bid one makes at an auction to see if he might have the good luck of buying what he is bidding on at such a ridiculously low price'I am not what the age perhaps demands, a reformer-that by no means, not a profound speculative spirit, a seer, a prophet; no [pardon me for saying it], I am in a rare degree an accomplished detective talent' (AUC, 1968, p.33; see also p.118).



Thus to SK the pathological interpretation of his work was simply an excuse not to deal with the critical issues which he saw his articles raising for the Christianity of Denmark.

However, the strongest evidence that the attack was not a pathological aberration at the end of SK's life is found in the journals themselves. Material attacking the institutional Church and the clergy appears in SK's work from before 1846. In a Journal entry of 1848 SK remarks:

What is preached in the churches is really not Christianity. On the one hand government officials and the clergy seem interested in having the country regarded as being Christian, and on the other hand people themselves seem to have a dim notion that after all it might be good to be a Christian, and therefore they still want to carry the name and want to prove that this is what they are, but nothing really remains of Christianity. What the clergy preach is not far removed from blasphemy (pap.viii 1 A 629 [JP374]).

In another entry, for the same period he writes:

If the Sunday ordinance were to be strictly observed, the churches first and foremost ought to be locked up on Sunday. After all, being a pastor is a means of living and the church is the pastor's shop; why, then should the pastor be the only businessman permitted to stay open on Sunday ? To transfer the church service to market-day and to list pastors in the census under the title of inn-keeper would be less epigrammatic...(papviii 2 B 175:15 [JP375]).

Such statements effectively summarises the principal themes found in SK's work seven years later. One, therefore, cannot dismiss the Attack as an aberration without first accounting for these numerous journal entries which would appear to suggest that SK's criticisms of the Church and its clergy emerged relatively early and in accordance with the rest of his thought. Yet this is not to ignore the fact that SK's deteriorating physical condition and family history are not important considerations in looking at the Attack, but to insist that these things in themselves cannot explain its distinctive content and structure.

# The ethical imperative of the gospel and the 'Attack'

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Thulstrup writes in relation to the *Attack*, 'The Christian requirement which SK proclaims precipitates a revaluation and underlining of the New Testament message concerning the imitation of Christ...' (Thulstrup, 1962, p.267). SK desired to engage the Danish establishment with the ethical imperative that self-revelation of God in Christ brings to bear on human existence. He hoped that by means of the ideal the power of the 'illusion of Christendom' would be broken and the foundations for a genuine spirituality created. He desired the ideological nature of the relationship between Church and State to be brought to an end, and for this to provide the way for new developments within Danish society and the Church.

Yet the ethical imperative of Christianity for SK did not, in the first instance, provide a pattern for reform, but a mirror in which to reveal the corruption of the Danish Establishment. It exposes the ideological nature of religion, the self-interests of the clergy, and the egotism of the Danish people. Yet it does not provide creative solutions in practical terms. The ideal functions as an investigative journalist who exposes something for what it really is and then leaves things to take their course<sup>1</sup>. The social change that it brings about is secondary.

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<sup>1</sup> 'I am not what the age perhaps demands, a reformer-that by no means, not a profound speculative spirit, a seer, a prophet; no [pardon me for saying it], I am in a rare degree an accomplished detective talent' (AUC, 1968, p.33; see also p.118).

The reason for this is because the ethical imperative of the Gospel of Christ, as we have already seen, is designed to drive people to the grace of God. SK's thought emphasis that all human institutions and life is fallen and expresses an alienated state. The self-revelation of God in Christ always brings an awareness that human existence and relations are less than what they should. And in this regard it functions as an ideal. Yet the ethical imperative of Christianity does not become obsolete because of this. For its purpose is to communicate the need for the forgiveness of God, not to make humanity perfect. SK, therefore, explains in his journal:

In my presentation severity is a dialectical "moment" in Christianity; but leniency is just as strongly expressed; the former is represented by the poetical pseudonyms, the latter by me personally. Thus it is the age has need of it, for it has taken Christianity in vain. But it would be an entirely different things if a desperate man had nothing else to say about Christianity than that it is the cruellest self-torture. To put an end to coquetry I have had to apply severity - and have applied it precisely in order to give impetus to the resort to leniency (AUC, 1968, p.94).

Two important consequences results from this and have considerable bearing on the interpretation of the *Attack*. The first is that SK cannot be understood as a typical social reformer. As Nordentoft highlights in his critique of the *Attack*, the work is primarily negative in nature and does not propose any substantive measure for the reconstruction of Christendom (see 2.1). Yet as we have just seen this is in accordance with what SK sees as the principle function of the gospel. That is, an exposing of the egotistical and self-interested nature of human relations in order to give impetus to the grace of God. This is why in the initial articles published in the *Fatherland*, SK makes it quite clear that he is not seeking a dismantling of Christendom and the State Church, but an 'admission'. In an article published on March 31, 1855, entitled, *What do I Want?*, he wrote:

Quite simply: I want honesty. I am not, as well-intentioned people represent...a Christian severity as opposed to a Christian leniency. By no means. I am neither leniency nor severity: I am - a human honesty.

The leniency which is the common Christianity in the land I want to place alongside of the New Testament in order to see how these two are related to one another....

I believe that, if possibly even the very extremist softening down of Christianity may hold good in the judgement of eternity, it is impossible that it should hold good when even artful tricks are employed to gloss over the difference between the Christianity of the New Testament and this softened form. What I mean is this: If a man is known for his graciousness - very well then, let me venture to ask him to forgive me all my debt; but even though his grace were divine grace, this is too much to ask, if I will not even be truthful about how great the debt is (AUC, 1968, p.37-38).

This explains why in 1851 after the publishing of *Training of Christianity*, SK was enraged by Dr. Rudelbach attempt to enlist him in the cause of ecclesiastical reform. In his Open Letter of that same year he made it very clear that he did not wish his work to be understood as an attempt at reformation. 'It is not "doctrine" which ought to be revised, and it is not "the Church" which ought to be reformed, and so on -. No, it is existence which should be revised. Our whole way of life is stuff and nonsense and lack of character...' (pap.x IV A 30 [JP3731]). In the same way, after the articles in the *Fatherland* began to appear he resisted the attempts of his contemporaries to interpret his work as revolutionary (pap.x I A 598 [JP6463]).

It also means that SK's thought cannot legitimately be interpreted as sectarian. For instance, Vernard Eller has argued that the *Attack* is the logical outworking of a series of sectarian influences on SK (Eller, 1968). It express a progression in his thinking that took him to a position that held that New Testament Christianity can only be restored through a dis-established church, constituted not unlike that of the 'Dunkers' [A Brethren movement]. Yet Eller's thesis fails to take account of the fundamental proposition that all human institutions for SK are fallen. To suggest that a sectarian movement provides a true representation of the demands of the gospel and what Christ requires is again to fail into the trap of identifying an alienated humanity with a reconciled humanity. It is to ascribe Christ to something that is less than what Christ demands. And so, the sectarian movement embodies exactly the same flaw as does the Establishment. It creates and perpetrates the illusion that what it stands for and represents is truly the Christianity of the New Testament.

The church, for SK, that comes closest to the New Testament is the one that willingly admits its deficiencies and seeks God's forgiveness. He insists that the only honest position to be taken is that all ecclesiastical institutions and life is less than what the gospel of Christ requires, and even, the reform of the church does not address this fundamental problem. In fact, SK suggests that reform in itself may even be detrimental if it creates the impression that it is going to truly realise what Christ requires. For the church cannot escape its socio-political and cultural context and is always implicated to a greater or lesser extent in the alienated and self-serving influences that shape social relations. It can never be understood as a perfect society. It is wrong, therefore, to understand the *Attack* as simplistic demand for a return to a New Testament ideal that does not take account of the changing context of Christianity. On the contrary, SK is acutely aware that the Church is not a perfect society that is able to escape the alienated patterns that shape human relations and institutions.

Therefore, although it is important to recognise the sectarian influences on SK, especially those of the Moravians, a sectarian reading of the *Attack* must be resisted. The *Attack* is not striving after a Utopian vision of the church, despite the romantic influences that may clearly be seen to be at work in SK's descriptions of first century Christianity, but a realistic assessment of what the church is. It is the failure to take account of the alienated nature of society, and the way the church is implicated in this, that the *Attack* protests against. What SK wants is for the individual and the ecclesiastical authorities to seriously look at, in the light of the gospel, what they embody, and, in view of this, to confess before God and others their guilt.

This approach allowed SK to emphasis the militant aspect of the Gospel, while at the same time defending the Establishment. For SK maintained that if the Establishment acknowledged its ideological nature and its distortion of the truth of Christianity, this together with the grace of God was sufficient. In other words, he was proposing that confession, rather than reform is what is needed in the Danish Church. Therefore, the self-revelation of God in Christ, brings not only the individual, but the institution itself to the point of confession and an encountering of the grace of God.

However, as Geismar has suggested there is something almost 'dishonest' in the position that SK comes to adopt (Geismar, 1927, p.449). SK insists on the militant nature of the gospel of Christ and its challenge to the socio-political structures of society, while at the same time using this rationale to defend the existing order.

As Geismar observes:

It has always seemed to me that in this sequence of thought there is something dishonest. And after the clarification of SK's thoughts about the relation between discipleship and grace it appears to me as if SK was offering Mynster a proposal on conditions whose impossibility he himself realised, the conditions of a spiritual moratorium, allowing the admission to take the place of action. One cannot be strict with oneself and indulgent towards others in such a way as to accept in others something whose dishonesty one has perceived as regards oneself. In the causes of the storm which shook the Church there is something here which has not been cleared up (Geismar, 1927, p.449).

Certainly there is a very real ambivalence in SK. He interprets Christianity as that which calls forth action, and then negates this demand through confession. He insists on the militant nature of the gospel, and then defends the established order.

This in part reflects the conflict, we noted in Chapter two, that SK was experiencing in his own self-identity as he attempted to hold together his radical peasant heritage with the apolitical conservative Golden-Age elite to which he belonged. It is interesting to note that SK himself was very aware of this tension in his own life and thought. As Thulstrup points out, from 1846 onwards there was a constant 'wrestling' in SK with Christ's demand for imitation. Increasingly he was finding it very difficult to reconcile the ethical imperative of the Gospel with his understanding of the grace of God. The 'grace defence' against the requirements of the gospel gradually weakening (Thulstrup, 1962).

Yet it was not until 1855, and in the midst of the *Attack*, that SK realised he could no longer defend the established order by calling for an admission and appealing to the grace of God. He wrote in the preface of the new edition of *Training in Christianity*:

My earlier thought was: if the Establishment can be defended at all, this is the only way...it defends itself by condemning itself; it acknowledges the Christian requirement, makes for its own part an admission of its distance from the requirement and that it is not even an effort in the direction of coming closer to it, but has recourse to grace....

Now on the other hand I am clear within myself about two things: that the Establishment is, Christianly, indefensible and every day that it endures is a crime; and that one is not permitted to draw upon grace in that way (AUC, 1968, p.55).

The ambiguity, therefore, identified by Geismar was resolved by SK himself. He recognised that the gospel's demand for transformation of one's way of living, could not just be seen as an occasion by which one is made aware of one's sin and encounters the grace of God. It had to be understood as a pattern. The ethical imperative of the gospel exposes not only the egotism and self-interest of human existence and institutions, but also demands that this egotism and self-interest is dealt with. It calls for the addressing of class distinctions and the taking down of barriers that create a society that is run by vested interests and the misappropriation of power and influence<sup>2</sup>. As SK writes in a Journal entry towards the end of his life, 'What the God of Christianity wants is a world-transformation, but a transformation of the actual, the practical world' (pap.xi II A 102 [JP561]).

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<sup>2</sup> 'Before God, then the beggar is infinitely more important to Him than the King-ininitely more important, for to the poor the Gospel is preached! But for the priest the king is infinitely more important than the beggar. "A beggar what help will he be to us? We might have to give Him money?" Impudent scoundrel-yes, Christianity is precisely...to give money' - (AUC, 1968, p.36)



However, this is not to say that SK began to believe in a Utopian state or that the alienated and fallen nature of the socio-political order could be finally resolved. The alienated structures of society and the compromised nature of Christianity would continue to persist. Yet the proclamation of the gospel would not only attack the ideological forces that shape society, it would provide a positive pattern for reform. It would initiate a state of 'becoming', that moves an alienated humanity towards reconciliation. As SK describes in an earlier journal entry:

An essentially ethical individual immediately converts greatness to contemporaneity. He say -to himself - this is what I will. Quite possibly I cannot reach it, but this is what I will. If I cannot reach it immediately, then I will creep; if in my whole lifetime I cannot do any more than creep along, then I shall creep along my whole life - but this is the direction. He does not let go of it; he is like a pilgrim who perhaps has vowed to walk on his knees to Jerusalem - and he died on the way; but from the point of view of the idea he has reached Jerusalem. And in this way the true ethical individual must reach the highest - he must reach it, if not before then in eternity (pap.x 1 A 393 [JP973]).

The *Attack*, therefore, marks a shift in SK's understanding of the relationship between society and the ideal. The role of Christianity in shaping the life of society is no longer seen purely in terms of exposing the ideological and alienated state of social relations and structures. Although Christianity continues to serve a prophetic role within society denouncing the practices and abuses within the social matrix, it does more than simply call people to encounter the grace of God. It challenges them to reform and change the patterns of behaviour and the values that are adhered to. Not that society will ever be free from its egotistical and self-serving ends, but that these can be addressed and regulated in the light of the ethical imperative of the gospel.

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# A descriptive approach to the definition of professionalism

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It is possible to define a profession as a body which organises itself according to fundamental principles and structures, focusing on the nature of the occupational body itself. It uses a descriptive approach that involves identifying the key characteristics that make up an ideal-type of the professions. For instance, if we follow Moore's approach, we can speak of six basic indicators of professionalism [Moore, 1970]. These are the nature of occupation, calling, organisation, education, codes of practice and autonomy.

### Occupation

A profession is a full-time paid occupation. Although this may be self-evident, it nevertheless is an important consideration in defining professionalism. The nature of a professional occupation has to be such that the work that is engaged in does not require a secondary occupation or income-producing activity. This is because a profession must be a primary occupational commitment. As Harold Wilensky notes, 'There is no reliable way of distinguishing, among the many useful and essential activities for individual and collective survival, which constitutes work or labour, except by the use of some market test' (Wilensky, 1964). The service that a professional provides, therefore, has to be regarded not only as a primary occupational commitment, but of such sufficient standing to be able to provide a principal source of income.

This criterion is also important for another reason. It not only distinguishes the professional from the amateur, but supports the claim to exceptional competence within a particular field. Pecuniary rewards consolidates the claim of occupational bodies to exclusives rights and position within a designated sphere of activity (Moore, 1970, p.8). Thus the full-time paid standing of the professional sustains the claim to exceptional competence.

However, this criterion does not distinguish the professional from the majority of other forms of occupation, although it is a necessary pre-requisite for the existence of a profession. For instance, Moore maintains that if there is not a sufficient demand within a society for a particular service that it provides a full-time source of employment and primary source of income, then there is no basis for the evolution of professions. 'The professional or quasi-professional may be the first occupational type to emerge in social evolution....Even so, neither the level of demand for specialised services nor the mechanisms for their payment may be adequate in many societies for the full fledged professional to exist' (Moore, 1970, p.8).

### **Calling**

A profession is a vocation. The implication of this is that a professional occupation must be more than a means of employment. To belong to a profession implies a life-long commitment to an accepted set of norms and standards, and an identification with 'professional peers and the profession as a collectivity' (Moore, 1970, p.8). Thus a profession fosters a consciousness of being set apart. It encourages the notion that as an occupational body its practitioners are 'called out from' other forms of occupation to the particular field. The use of technical language, and common forms of practice, and even common attire all foster this sense. This leads to the third criterion.

### **Organisation**

A profession is a distinctive occupational association. It involves particular organisational structures and relationships between practitioners. As Goode notes the nature of the professions is such that they form 'communities within communities' (Goode, 1957 p.196). The basis of these communities is 'mutual identification of distinctly occupational interests, as compared with and often in competition with common employee status interests, employer interests, or interests in the entire sector of an economic system' (Moore, 1970, p.8). The common occupational interests that provide the basis of such professional associations include such mundane matters as the terms and conditions of employment, but also more significantly the criteria of access to the occupation and normative rules of behaviour.

Thus these professional bodies differ from other occupational associations in terms of the unique form of social control that they are able to exercise. This social control usually takes two forms.

The first, is in the way in which the professional institution lays down the standards controlling entry to the group. The educational requirements and conditions for entry are under the control and jurisdiction of the association and this enables a profession to ensure its exclusive and selective nature. The second, is in terms of the ethical codes of conduct and practice. This provides a mechanism of control to maintain standards of performance and occupational integrity. Thus the structure of a profession is such that it is able to control access to its ranks and not only enforce standards of technical proficiency but also behavioural norms.

The professional association ensures an 'honourable monopoly' and safeguards performance standards among its practitioners. As Russell writes, a profession preserves 'the necessary standards in their skills by vetting new practitioners and enforcing a code of professional conduct; and for these purposes they will naturally form themselves into an association which shares common interests and concerns' (Russell, 1980, p.11). This leads us to two further characteristics of professionalism - education and codes of practice.

## **Education**

A profession is an educated elite. The length of education required and its location may vary among occupations, nevertheless it is one of the fundamental defining characteristics of any profession. The importance of education in the professions is two-fold. Firstly, it sustains the notion that a profession is an occupation that applies a theoretical body of knowledge to specialised tasks. To become a member of a profession involves achieving a proscribed level of proficiency in one's field of knowledge so as to be able to make an independent application of the theoretical principles involved. 'A craft handed on from father to son, be it ever so skilled and rare, is not professional; to be professional it must be grounded in a systematic body of theory. The builder knows from his own experience and from the experience handed down to him in his trade just what sort of lintel is needed for a certain window, but the structural engineer knows this without experience, from a grasp of theoretical principles involved' (Coxon, 1979, p.42).

The educational requirements give the professions a distinctive occupational status. Their claim to control the application of a body of expert knowledge within society grants them particular privileges and advantages in relation to other forms of work. Thus the educational nature of the professions safeguards a particular social position. This accounts in part for why theoretical bodies of learning are such a distinguishing feature of the professions, while being very much a secondary consideration in the training for non-professional roles (Johnson, 1972, p.41). It also explains why access to the professions is strictly governed by necessary qualifications and training.

However, education serves another important purposes for the professions, that is, 'socialisation'. The importance of developing a proficiency within a field of learning exist very much in conjunction with acquiring the norms and values of the profession itself. Professional practice involves considerable occupational autonomy. Unique opportunities exist for exploitation, while the control that can be exercised by institutional bodies is limited. Ethical norms and principles that govern a profession, therefore, must become an integral part of the professional outlook itself. An intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, code of conduct needs to be conveyed. This is done through the educational process which has to be of sufficient length to ensure this socialisation. In other words, to become a member of a profession not only involves learning an academic discipline but also a particular outlook on life. Thus the process of education, which is controlled by the professional institution, is a means of safeguarding professional identity and practice<sup>1</sup>.

### **Codes of Practice.**

A profession is an occupational body governed by an ethical code of conduct and practice. In a number of early writings concerned with the sociology of the professions an emphasis was placed on altruistic service as the key characteristic of professionalism.

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<sup>1</sup> 'A Professional body may be regarded as a separate sub-culture into which a postulant enters only after selection, training, examination, and certification, culminating in a ritual which has some of the significance of a rite de passage. This period of initiation is characterised by instruction in a body of knowledge that has been organised into a coherent system. The initiate is required to familiarise himself with the system of abstract propositions that account in general terms for the phenomena comprising the profession's interest' (Russell, 1980, p.11).

Professional codes of practice are an important characteristic feature of the professions. The profession-client relationship is a social contract, governed by a set of rules. The nature of this contract differs from that used in other forms of social inter-action. It is impersonal, so the professional is supposed to provide his services without regard to 'his estimate of the client's personal worthiness' (Coxon, 1979, p.42). It is confidential, so that information that the practitioner receives within the context of the relationship should not be disclosed outside of it. It is authoritative, because it is assumed that the professional has a particular expertise in a certain field and has been authorised by a professional institution.

These codes of conduct express not only the professional's obligation to his or her client, but also his or her peers. Incompetence or misconduct or a failure to protect a client's interests necessarily reflects badly on a professional association. Thus in this way one of the purposes of the professional institution is to ensure the contractual nature of the professional relationship.

### **Autonomy**

A profession is self-regulating. The professional organisation rather than the society or the client defines the nature of the expected service and claims to be the only legitimate arbiter of improper performance of service. As Freidson observes, 'The strongest professions have thus far managed to preserve much of the right to be the arbiters of their own work performance, justified by the claim that they are the only ones who know enough to be able to evaluate it properly, and that they are also actively committed to ensuring that performance lives up to basic standards' (Freidson, 1970, p.33).

In practice, occupational autonomy emerges as a consequence of meeting many of the previous criteria. 'Avoidance of the self-service of the laity, commitment to a calling, organisation to the effective point of controlling admission to the occupation, specialised education to the point and quality that one can readily distinguish the professional and the merely experienced layman, and effective norms to assure competent performance of services beyond the layman's grasp' all provide a basis for this professional autonomy (Moore, 1970, p.13).



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